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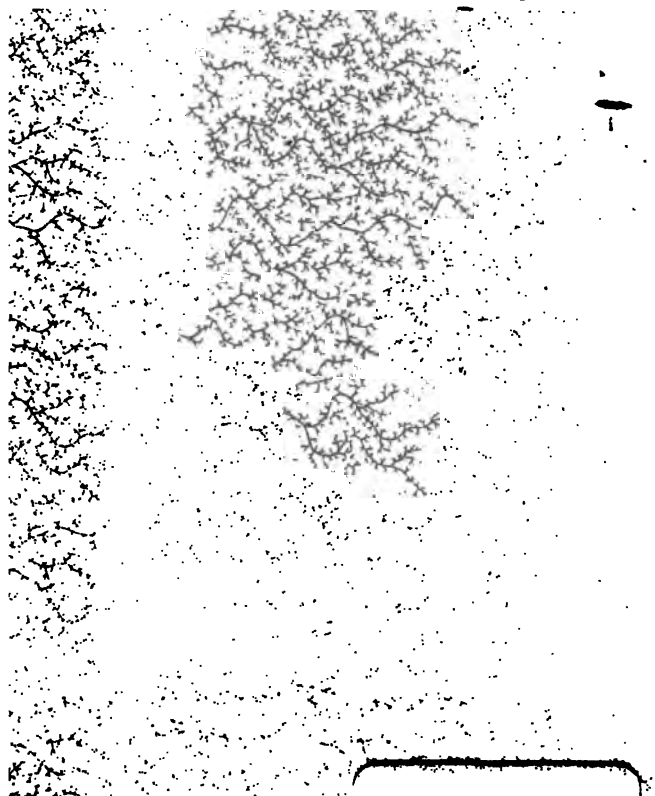
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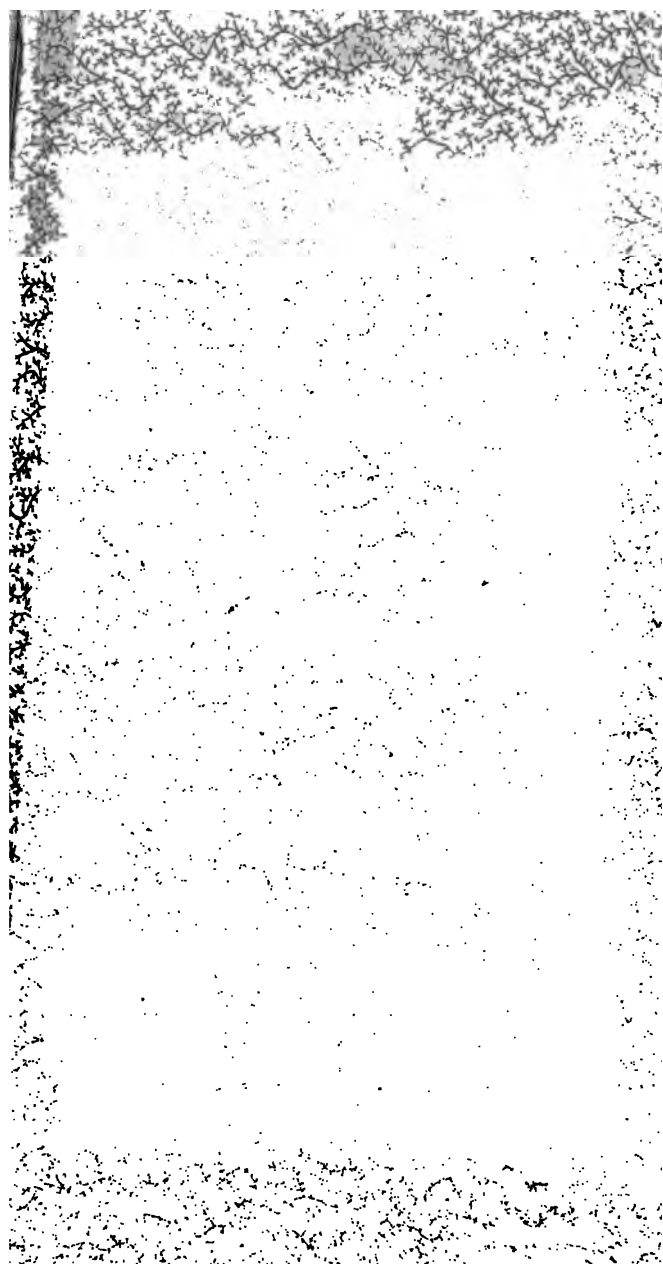
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# THE JACQUERIE.

A NOVEL.

BY

G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF

"THE GIPSY," "THE ANCIENT REGIME," "THE GENTLEMAN OF  
THE OLD SCHOOL," ETC., ETC., ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

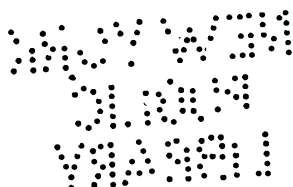
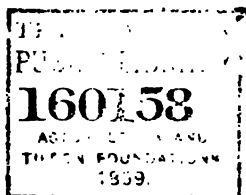
VOL. II.

NEW-YORK:

HARPER & BROTHERS, 82 CLIFF-STREET

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1842.



# THE JACQUERIE.

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## CHAPTER I.

"HOLLA, my masters, holla!" said the page; "come forth and speak to my noble lord the Capital de Buch."

Morne gazed at him sullenly without reply; but the old man, who in his day had seen something both of courts and camps, replied, with a lowly intonation of the head, "What would the noble capital? we are ever his humble slaves and bondmen."

"Who have you there, Maurice?" inquired the voice of the capital. "Anybody who can give us information?"

"One seems a dull swine enough," replied the boy, with all the insolence of presumptuous youth; "a mere Jacques Bonhomme; but the other is civil. Come hither, come hither and speak to my lord—him who has a tongue in his head, I mean."

"What would my noble lord, the renowned Capital de Buch?" demanded the old man, advancing with a courtly air, which he could well assume even towards those whom he most bitterly detested.

"Simply," replied the Capital de Buch, "to know my best way towards Clermont; for I have spent so much time needlessly by misdirection, that I would fain lose no more, if it be possible to help it: you are doubtless of this country, and can therefore afford the information that I want."

"Good faith, my noble lord," answered Thibalt, "I fear that I should make you but a sorry guide, for I am even now inquiring my way of this good swineherd; but from the directions he has given me, I doubt not that I can guide you to the next small village, where certainly you will find some one to conduct you onward gladly."

The words had scarcely passed his lips, however, when the old man suddenly started and turned pale; for a personage rode up to the side of the capital from behind, whom Thibalt had not before seen, and who gazed upon him with an inquiring and somewhat doubtful air, till at length the voice of Walleran Urgel exclaimed, "How

now, old Thibalt la Rue, how now ! Do you pretend not to know the road to Clermont, you who have lived here for so many years ?”

“ I speak truth, noble sir, upon my word,” replied the white-haired villain : “ this forest puzzles and confounds me, and I was even now inquiring of my good friend the swineherd here the nearest way home.”

“ Pshaw, pshaw !” cried Walleran Urgel, “ thou knowest the way right well, whatever it was that brought thee hither. Lead on, lead on ! I remember thee of old, Thibalt.”

“ Ay, but it is many years since we have met, noble sir,” said Thibalt, “ and my memory has sadly failed me.”

“ Forward, without more words !” exclaimed the old man, impatiently. “ I beseech you, my good Lord Capital, let him be sent forward : he will guide us well enough if he be compelled, for it is as cunning an old slave as ever lived. There is some cause to think that to him is owing the death of more than one noble gentleman in years long gone. He is here in the forest for no right purpose, I will warrant, and his anxiety to remain behind us does but increase suspicion. Send him on before, my lord, and believe not his tale of want of knowledge : he knows well enough whatever he will know.”

“ Come, mount thy beast, old man,” cried the capital : “ you see you have established no good character for truth, and therefore I must not credit your affected ignorance. Lead on, then, and quickly. What wouldst thou have from me !”

As he spoke, Thibalt approached close to his horse's side, saying, in a low tone, “ I will do my best to guide you, my noble lord ; but put not implicit faith in what your honourable friend tells you. You know he was always reputed somewhat wanting here,” and he laid his finger's significantly on his forehead ; “ some fancied injury done to his brother in days long past has made him always hate me, though I call Heaven to witness it was not I that betrayed the count : how could I ?”

“ Enough, enough,” cried the capital ; “ I want no defence, good man. So that you lead me honestly on my way, that is all that I have to do with thee. Mount thy beast and go on : thou shalt be rewarded for thy pains ; so, now, prattle no more, but be quick, for it is late in the day, and we must reach Clermont this night.”

"Not by my help," murmured Thibalt to himself, "not by my help, proud capital." He took care, however, to give no vent to such feelings, but proceeded to the side of his ass, and spent a few moments in arranging his saddle, calling upon Morne to help him, and whispering with him eagerly as he did so.

This continued so long that the capital grew impatient, and he exclaimed, "Come, come, no more of this, old sir, lest I ask why thou speakest below thy breath; mount thy beast, and lead on at once, or worse will befall thee. I am not one to be trifled with. Ride behind him, Hardman, and if it should turn out that his whisperings have been to evil effect, send thy spear through him. Methinks I never saw a less honest face," he continued, speaking to Walleran Urgel: "you tell me you know him well, and that he did some evil in other days; and I can easily believe it."

"It is true, my Lord Capital," said Urgel, riding on beside him, "it is true, that we should never condemn without proof, and there is no absolute proof against this old man; but yet there are moral convictions beyond all evidence, which come in when our reason fails us; and how often does it do so in every stage of our journey through life? An instinctive feeling of love or antipathy will suddenly rise up, we know not why or wherefore, and God himself will seem to point out to us our enemies or our friends. All that is proved is, that the master of that old villain trusted, confided in, consulted him, found in him much cunning, much experience, and in the end was betrayed, no one clearly knew by whom, dying without trial, by the act of a brutal king; that all his relations and followers being proscribed, this man alone was suffered to enjoy wealth and freedom, and has since become a freeman, having obtained his franchise by long living in a town, protected by the very monarch who slew his master. Where his riches come from, no one can tell, but it is known that he is wealthy; and few entertain a doubt that his wealth, like that of Judas, is the price of blood."

"The case seems very clear," replied the capital; "and we must watch him narrowly; for it is not unlikely that he may think fit, by his whisperings with that dull villain, to sell our blood too to any body of adventurers he may know of; and my head would certainly be prized at some gold among them."

"Thank God," answered the old man, "I have not yet murdered a sufficient number of my fellow-creatures to be worth the purchase. My ransom would not buy you a pair of gauntlets, captal; and yours would, at any time, enrich the families of all those that you have slain. Such is the difference, in the world's estimation, between the man of peace and the man of bloodshed."

"Nay, now, tell me," said the captal, smiling, "supposing that you were able and had the right to educate you youth"—and he pointed to Albert Denyn—"exactly as you would, tell me, you who cry out so much against the noble vocation of arms, what would you make him? the singer of dull canticles in the chapel of a monastery? or the solitary teacher of some country church? or the vain priest of some city congregation, the corrupter of citizens' wives, the hypocritical preacher of temperance and chastity, little followed by himself?"

"No, no, no!" exclaimed the old man, vehemently; "I would have him none of these things; but I would make him what knights were in other times, before bloodshed was a trade and knighthood but an office. I would make him the defender of the wronged and the oppressed; the man to whom, under God, the widow and the orphan might look up for help against tyranny; one who should shed the blood of the oppressor, but of none other, and should not lend his sword to selfish quarrels. I would make him, in short, in everything like the Lord of Mauvinet, except in not serving a tyrant, and fancying that he is serving his country. Such would I make him, if I had power to make, but I have no power; and though I do believe he deserves well, and to be something better than a mere sworder, yet he must take his chance, even as the rest do, and turn out what fortune will."

The captal smiled. "In this world, my good friend," he said, "we must follow the current of the world; and all that we can do, I fear, is to take the top wave and swim above our fellows. As for that good youth, I will do the best for him that I can, the rest he must do for himself; but I doubt much whether whatever he or I can do will make him one of those same errant knights whereof the fabliaux talk so prettily. But let us be sure this old man is leading us right. Do you yourself know the country?"

"Very slightly," answered Walleran Urgel; "and yet,

it seems to me, he is following the road honestly enough. But see, here comes a peasant on a mule; we can get tidings from him, doubtless. Look, the villain stops to talk with him himself."

The Captal de Buch touched his horse with the spur, and the animal darted forward at a bound, bringing him up to the side of the peasant with whom Thibalt had been speaking in a moment. "What did he ask you?" demanded the captal, sternly.

"He asked me the way to Clermont, noble lord," replied the man; "he asked me nothing more."

The answer, perhaps, might have satisfied the captal, had his suspicions been only slightly awakened; but, as it was, he turned at once sharply towards Thibalt, and detected at one glance a quiet, satisfied, sneering smile, which made him conclude that the question he had put to the peasant had been asked merely to deceive him, and to make the story which had been told regarding ignorance of the road the more credible. "And which, then, is the way to Clermont?" he demanded.

"It is a long way, sir," answered the peasant; "it will be much nearer for you, noble sir, to go to St. Leu; for you will not arrive at Clermont till after midnight."

"And how far is St. Leu?" demanded the captal.

"Not above four leagues, sir," replied the man: "it is but a little distance to St. Leu; and at the hostelrie there you will find all that any one can desire."

"Indeed," answered the captal; "that must be an abundant place. I have been in many a hostelrie in my life without finding one of these much-boasted lodgings, where nothing remained to be desired. However, once more lead on! We will try this hostelrie at St. Leu; for certainly midnight is somewhat too late to arrive at Clermont. You will go with us, my good friend," he continued, addressing Walleran Urgel: "you know that we have much to talk about."

"We have, we have," answered the old man: "I seek not to quit you yet, captal; for my mission is not fulfilled, and I must not leave you till it be done."

The captal gave the signal for marching forward again, and the band, with Thibalt at its head, once more resumed its progress through the long glades of the forest.

By the side of the captal rode Walleran Urgel; but it must be remarked that by this time his external appearance was very greatly altered. The goatskins which

had formerly enveloped him had been exchanged at the town of Mans for other garments of a kind less liable to excite remark ; and he now appeared habited simply, but well, and as might become a person fitted by station to ride in company with the Captal de Buch. Nor did his air and manner belie his dress in the least, but, on the contrary, were still above it ; and the rough men-at-arms, who saw him managing his fiery horse with ease and dignity, and dressed in the clothing of a nobleman of that day, felt somewhat ashamed of the rude jests which they had poured forth when they had first beheld him, and acknowledged that, though contorted and deformed, the old man had a princely air, and must have been brought up in no mean school of knightly graces, where such an air and movements had been communicated to a form like his.

For the rest of the way the captal and his misshapen companion continued in eager conversation ; and it became clear that, although the attendants of the English leader marked with reverence the eager and confidential tone in which their lord's conversation was carried on, and kept at some distance behind, the old man Thibalt, on the contrary, was eager to catch the words that were spoken, and for that purpose suffered his ass to lag in its pace till forced to go on. He then, pretending to have dropped something, slipped off the beast suddenly, and, ere the captal and his companion perceived him, was close to their horses' feet.

For this last act, the motive of which the dwarf seemed well to understand, Walleran Urgel struck him a sharp stroke with a willow wand which he carried in his hand, saying, " Get thee on, traitor ! Thou canst hear nothing here that will profit thee. Get thee on, I say, and remember that thou art known and understood."

Thibalt made no reply, but crept forward and mounted his beast again, murmuring something to himself, the substance of which, however, no one could distinguish. The conversation between the captal and his companion was at once resumed, and proceeded in a low tone, but with evident eagerness, on both parts. Those who came behind distinguished only three words, which were spoken by Walleran Urgel : " This very night, this very night ;" but it would seem that Thibalt had heard more, for two or three times he laughed, with a low, quiet, peculiar laugh, unpleasant in its sound ; and several times

he muttered, "So, so—I thought so; but we will see, but we will see. Foxes bite as well as wolves; so we will see."

Low clouds covered the sky, almost to the very edge of the horizon where the autumnal sun was setting, with somewhat angry redness, when a tall steeple rising up above the trees announced that the travellers were approaching a small town or village.

"What place have we here?" demanded the capital.

"I really do not know," answered the old man Thibalt, to, whom he spoke, "but it looks to me very much like the steeple of St. Just."

"Why, that is on the borders of Picardy," said the capital, "and many a mile beyond Clermont: how is this?"

"I told you, noble sir," replied the other, "that I had no good knowledge of the way, and it would seem that the peasant we spoke to not long ago deceived me. At all events, it is not my fault, for I forewarned you that I could not guide you right."

"There is some truth in what he says," remarked the capital, turning partly towards Walleran Urgel.

"As much truth as to season the lie more completely," was the reply; "but let us ride on, my Lord Capital. Heaven knows whether we shall ever discover, or shall not, the motive of his falsehood; but you may be as sure that he is acquainted with this road as well as any man now living, as that you yourself are not."

"Of that, at least, I am quite certain," replied the capital, laughing; "but if his object be an evil, he may find himself mistaken. We shall surely meet with an inn here; and whether it be good or bad, we must make the best of it for the night."

The party rode on, and the little hostelrie at St. Just soon received them within its ever hospitable walls. Though the chambers were not many, and the accommodation somewhat scanty, considering the numbers that now poured into the courtyard of the inn, sufficient room was found for all; and the capital, who had kept his eye upon the old man Thibalt, saw with some satisfaction that he made no effort to escape during the hurry and bustle which succeeded their arrival, but looked carefully to the housing of his ass, and to the preparation of his own supper.

It may be well supposed that a personage of such im-

portance as the captal monopolized a great part of the host's attention, and everything was confusion and anxiety to provide him with all he wanted. He took care, however, to speak a word or two to one of his men, giving him manifold cautions in regard to watching the proceedings of their guide, in regard to whose purposes he still felt some suspicion. He then went away for a few moments to see the chamber which had been prepared for him, leaving his train below. Several matters occurred to detain him longer than he had at first expected, and when he came down again he found the whole kitchen vacant, except where one or two of the servants of the inn were busily employed in laying out tables for supper, and otherwise making ready for the entertainment of himself and his followers during the evening. The rest, to say the truth, were all out in the courtyard, amusing themselves with the gambols of a monkey, except, indeed, Albert Denyn, who was sitting at the door of the inn with a cuirass, which he had been polishing, leaning against his knee, while his mind seemed to have reverted to other scenes and times; and an expression of deep melancholy sat upon his countenance, very different from the thoughtless gayety which sparkled in the eyes of his companions, as the monkey sprang hither and thither at the commands of his master.

For a moment no one saw the captal; and he at length laid his hand upon Albert's arm, saying in a low tone, as if not to interrupt the sport that was going forward, "Have you seen our good friend Walleran, Albert?"

"No, my lord," cried Albert, starting up.

"Nor the old man Thibalt?" asked the captal.

"Neither, my lord," replied Albert, "but they cannot be far."

The captal shook his head with a doubtful look, and called to him the soldier whom he had charged to watch the movement of their suspected guide. The man stared, and looked confused at his lord's question; but frankly owned that his task had been forgotten, "though he felt sure," he said, "that the old man was still there."

The captal said "that he did not believe it," and it soon proved that his suspicions were just. Search was made for Thibalt, but in vain; and the captal, though he only laughed at the idea of danger, commanded his negli-

gent follower to do penance for his forgetfulness of orders by keeping watch in the courtyard of the inn during the first four hours of the night. The rest of the evening passed over tranquilly; and Walleran Urgel, who had gone forth for a short time to inquire if, in the neighbourhood, there was to be found one of those solitary habitations which best suited his disposition and frame of mind, returned soon after, and partook of the meal which had been prepared for the capital, though he joined not in the gayety which reigned around the board. When the supper was over, the great leader and the old man retired for a time to the chamber of the English knight, and those who passed by heard them speaking long and eagerly.

They separated not till nearly midnight, and the last words of Walleran Urgel, as they did part, were, "You shall have them all; at your return you shall have them all."

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## CHAPTER II.

On the same night of which we have just been speaking, the sun went down red and angrily, leaving storms in the sky behind him; and the wind blew, and the rain pattered hard amid the branches of the forest in which Caillet had fixed his abode. The torrent from the sky rushed in at various points, and, indeed, only one corner of the hut offered anything like comfort. Among the hay and fern with which that corner was strewed, Caillet had cast himself down to sleep; but slumber had not yet approached his eyelids, when somebody lifted sharply the latch of the cottage.

Caillet started up and listened, doubting whether his ears deceived him; but a moment or two after the door shook violently, and a voice exclaimed, "Caillet, Caillet! let me in: it is I, Thibalt la Rue; quick, let me in."

Caillet instantly drew back the large wooden bolt, and gave the old man admittance, though not a little surprised at such a visit and at such an hour.

"This is, indeed, entering into the scheme eagerly, Thibalt," he said: "the youngest of us could not do better than this."

"Hush, Caillet, hush," replied the old man: "put to the door and listen. Surely I heard some one by the well under the hill."

"Your own fears, your own fears, Thibalt," answered Caillet: "you will find few people wandering here at this time of night, except those who have such business as you and I have; but tell me what brings you?"

"Matters of much importance," said Thibalt, in a hurried, anxious tone, "matters of much importance; but listen, still listen, good Caillet."

"Pshaw," answered the latter: "if any one comes here, he leaves not the place alive."

"But suppose," rejoined Thibalt, "there should be such things as spirits, Caillet?"

Caillet laughed aloud. "What, Thibalt!" he exclaimed, "you with such fears! I never dreamed that you could believe in spirits! Visions of old women and children, of fools and dotards! Speak something like sense, and tell me what you dread."

"Nay, nay," answered the old man, "but I have heard, Caillet, I have heard—"

"And so have I," interrupted Caillet, scornfully, "and so have I heard a thousand times. I have heard the priest of St. Peter's chapel swear that he had seen a whole legion of devils come whirling round the place; that he had beheld it with his own eyes; but it was found out at length that the saint would not protect the place from such infernal visitors unless his priest had ten golden crowns to buy a new censer, which, in reality, cost five. The old women of the parish soon provided the money, and the devils disappeared. Out upon it, Thibalt! Speak sense, and tell me what it is that brings thee here at this time of night; or, rather, inform me first what made you go wandering about this afternoon, through every road in the forest, as if it had been your pleasure to puzzle and perplex those you were guiding, and to lead them round and round this spot, instead of taking them away."

The old villain answered with a low chuckle, for he was now somewhat reassured by the presence of his companion, though, strange as it may seem, he who was restrained by no conscientious feeling, by no fear of God's retributive justice, was terrified at the idea of unearthly beings, and fully believed in their power of visiting and chastising the sins of man.

"You watched us, did you?" he demanded; "you watched us from the top of the hill, then?"

"Yes, and with no slight surprise," replied Caillet, "to find you keep them in the forest nearly till sunset, when you knew I wanted them away."

"But *I* wanted them here," he said; "I wanted them here, Caillet. I sought to detain them within reach of you, and for a reason which you shall soon hear. Think you, Caillet, that I know who is the man you hate the most on earth?"

"You mean the Lord of Mauvinet," answered Caillet; "but you are mistaken."

"It is you who are mistaken," replied the old man. "I do not mean the Lord of Mauvinet, I speak of Albert Denyn, my good friend, the fair youth Albert Denyn; it is him you hate. Between you and the Lord of Mauvinet there can be no rivalry, between you and Albert Denyn there is. I know it all as well as if I had seen it. Now tell me, Caillet, what would you give to injure him? What would you give to blast all his fortunes forever, to take from him hopes and prospects of the brightest kind, and keep him in servitude and bondage all his life?"

"What would I give!" exclaimed Caillet; "I would give my right hand."

"Ha, ha," said the old man, "you are honest in your hatreds, however, Caillet. Well, then, now for another question: do you know who these people were that came thither to-day?"

"No," answered the other, "I do not. Morne and you were both gone before I came down, and I have seen no one since."

"Well, then, I will tell thee," rejoined the old man: "the troop was that of the Captal de Buch, and with him—"

"Was that boy," exclaimed Caillet, interrupting him.

"Yes, he was," replied his companion; "but it was not of him I spoke; it was of another, of an old man; of one, perhaps, whom you have never beheld—deformed, contorted."

"Ah! I have seen him," answered Caillet: "long in the arms, wrapped up in goatskins; a madman, a mere fool."

"A madman, if you will," said Thibalt, "but no fool, and without goatskins now, though what dresses he

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may wear at times he only knows. However, this man is my enemy—”

“And therefore you would make him mine, of course,” replied Caillet, blowing up the embers of the half-extinct fire, and smiling bitterly as he did so; “but you may save yourself the trouble, old Thibalt: he is my foe already. He came between me and my purposes, and that is what I pardon not, Thibalt. So that boy is here, is he? What would I give now for one half hour face to face with him in this forest! It were worth ten years from any other period of my life; but that is impossible. However, what is it that you would tell me? How can you give me the means of punishing him?”

“Through this old man,” answered Thibalt, “through this old man, Caillet: so shall we both have vengeance of our enemies; you of yours, and I of mine; through this dwarf you shall inflict the greatest evil, punishment—if you will—upon that boy.”

“How, how, how?” demanded Caillet, impetuously. “What has he to do with Albert Denyn?”

“Much, very, very, very much,” replied Thibalt. “That cripple, that half-mad, half-roguish cripple, possesses the means of raising Albert Denyn from what he is to high and noble fortunes; he will do it, too, if he be not prevented.”

“And how can I stay him?” asked Caillet, sullenly: “you tell me such facts but to torment me. This man is with the Captal de Buch, is he? What does he with him? How came he in the train of the captal? How can he raise this Albert? He, a beggarly wandering outcast!”

“I will tell thee, I will tell thee all,” replied Thibalt; “but give us a light first, I pray thee: thou sittest blowing the embers there till thou lookest like a fiend by the glimmering glare; thou hast a torch, or a lamp, or something, surely.”

Caillet made no answer; but, searching sullenly among the dry fern in one corner of the hut, he produced a large rosin torch, which he soon contrived to light, though the fire was low. Its red and smoky flame, however, did not serve to make the expression of his own countenance, or that of the old man, assume an appearance less fierce and terrible; and as he moved about the point of the torch among the ashes, he continued to murmur something concerning Albert De-

nyn, which showed his companion how completely he had aroused the bitter passions of his heart.

Thibalt lost not the opportunity, but, with matchless skill, threw fresh fuel upon the flame of anger and jealousy, till Caillet turned angrily upon him, demanding, "How is it to be done? Speak at once; for, by Heaven, if you continue teasing me any longer, without telling me what you seek, I will drive you out into the forest, and leave you to the care of the spirits you talk of."

"What I mean is this," answered the old man, "that he who, with a good and unflinching blow, cleaves the scull of this same mischievous vagrant, will do more to injure Albert Denyn than were he to lop off the youth's right hand."

"But why should I not cleave the scull of Albert Denyn himself?" asked Caillet.

"That is impossible," answered Thibalt, "that is quite impossible. There is no chance of his straying from the band of the Captal de Buch; and though a wolf may snatch a lamb from amid a flock of sheep, yet one would need to be a lion indeed to seek prey amid such a herd as that. It cannot be, Caillet."

"Then how can the other be?" demanded his companion. "Will the misshapen dwarf, who needs protection most, will he wander away, and leave the troop with whom he has already sought safety? No, no, Thibalt, none of such vain, idle schemes! I have already hazarded too much by seeking to seize opportunity ere it was ripe. Deal with him yourself; I will have nothing to do with that deed."

"I would deal with him readily," replied Thibalt, "were not good King John a captive in England; but this man, whom you hold to be a fool, has been wise enough to keep himself hid from all eyes till that danger was past. Now he comes forth, however, into sunshine, and fears not to show himself to any one. You need not fear that opportunity will be wanting. The captal leaves him here in Beauvoisis till he returns with this Albert Denyn from the north. So much have I learned by the way; but if you let the present occasion pass, when he is near at hand, I will predict that you will see one enemy at least triumph over you."

"That he shall never," answered Caillet, "that he shall never, if I can prevent him; and if this meddling fool must thrust himself in my way again, the conse-

quences be upon his own head. Nevertheless, you shall tell why, and how, and wherefore; by what tie this old man is linked with Albert Denyn, and what is the source of your enmity towards him. Ay, Thibalt, to the most minute particular."

"But listen, Caillet, listen," cried his cunning companion, who did not seem particularly willing to enter into the causes of his hatred towards Walleran Urgel. "This old knave must die, that is clear; but can we not so manage it that his death shall seem to lie at the door of one of these lords?"

"How can that be," demanded Caillet, "if I am to do the deed? But I will tell thee what, Thibalt, I will kill no man secretly and in cold blood. If I meet him in the forest, he shall answer me for having crossed my path before; but I will not seek him and slay him in his sleep, as doubtless thou wouldst have."

"Not I," answered Thibalt. "Thou shalt meet him in the forest, and there do with him what thou wilt—ay, to-morrow morning by daybreak—but thou art so impatient! Hear me out, and let us speak low," and, bending down his head, he continued in whispered conversation with Caillet, detailing a scene of cunning villainy, to which the other listened with strange feelings, wherein stern satisfaction at the prospect of the promised vengeance was mingled with some sensations of contempt at the serpent-like art of his companion.

The result will be seen hereafter.

The morning was as dull and drizzly as the opening of any autumnal day could be, when the Captal de Buch and his party assembled in the courtyard of the inn. The hour was early, too, and the gray twilight and the grayer shower scarcely permitted the personages there gathered together to see each other's faces, as they bustled about in preparations for speedy departure. The captal himself, with his arms folded on his chest, stood watching the progress of the rest, and giving orders from time to time, till at length all was completed, the horses caparisoned and brought forth, baggage and provisions charged upon inferior beasts of burden, and nothing, in short, wanting but the foot in the stirrup and the hand upon the mane.

It was at that moment, when the principal squire of the captal had approached to tell him that all was ready, that the great leader, looking round, inquired, in a quiet

tone, "Where is our good friend Walleran Urgel? Will he not come to bid us adieu? Ay, and that old man, too, that led us hither? Although he left us last night somewhat strangely, as yet we have no cause to think that he has deceived or betrayed us, and I would fain give him a reward for his trouble."

"He has not been seen since last night, my lord," replied the man to whom he spoke. "I sat up to watch if he would come back, but he has not made his appearance again."

"Your fierce looks affrighted him," replied the captal, laughing. "But where is our other companion? I must needs speak one word with him before we go. Seek him, Albert, seek him. He promised me some papers which I have not yet received. He is not wont to be a slug-gard."

It was in vain that Albert Denyn sought for the old man, Walleran Urgel, throughout the house and the village. The bed in which he had lain was found vacant; the host of the little inn expressed a belief that he had gone forth, with the first ray of the morning, to visit an old hermitage in the wood hard by; and one of the horse-boys declared that he had seen him speaking with somebody in the court just before the dawn of day.

"We have a long march to make," said the captal, "and I cannot stop." He paused, with his eyes moodily fixed on the ground for a moment, and then added, "Albert, you shall remain behind; wait for his return; receive the papers, and bring them after me to Peronne."

Had the wishes of Albert Denyn been consulted, it is probable that he would gladly have left the task to some one else; although he was now quitting his native land with none of those feelings of bounding joy which often fill the heart of youth at the aspect of new scenes and new adventures. He went not willingly, but he went resolved; and the very pangs that he felt on parting with those he loved best on earth made him anxious to hurry forward till all was accomplished. The lingering regrets, the wishes, the hopes, all the bright things, in short, that he was leaving behind him, were to his eyes as one of those fairy visions in the legends of old romance which obstruct the way of the adventurous knight in the path of duty; and he longed to break through and to quit all such illusions forever. He knew, however, that, in the present instance, there was nothing left for him but to obey; and

he accordingly made no farther reply to his leader than a mere demand of what he was to require at the hands of the old man, Walleran Urgel.

"He will know," replied the captal: "if you but say the papers that he promised me, he will give them to you at once. You shall have Martin and Grandison with you to bear you company; for these are times when it does not do to ride alone."

In the choice he had made of the two companions left with Albert Denyn, the captal had been guided by his observation of the relationships which had sprung up in the course of the march between his young follower and his old retainers. He had perceived that the two men, Martin and Grandison, though older and more experienced soldiers than Albert Denyn, had, nevertheless, felt the influence which his superior education gave him, and willingly submitted thereunto, courting his friendship and society, while many of the other veteran troopers looked with no small jealousy upon him whom they stigmatized as their lord's new favourite.

Although the captal was too strict a commander ever to suffer idle murmurs to affect his conduct, or even to meet his ear without reproof or punishment, he took care to avoid all cause of reasonable discontent; and, in order to show both to the youth himself and the rest of his retainers that there was a motive, independent of favour, for assigning the present task to Albert Denyn, he turned again towards his young follower, saying, "I am sure, Albert, that I can trust you as fully as even my older comrades; and in this instance you have the advantage over them of knowing something of the country between Beauvais and Peronne."

"I knew every road and path, my lord, in days of old," replied Albert Denyn; "and I do not think that I have altogether forgotten them yet, although I got bewildered in the forest yesterday. I will rejoin you, then, my lord, with all speed; but how long am I to wait?"

"If he come not soon, seek him," answered the captal; "but, at all events, set out for Peronne by to-morrow morning."

Albert Denyn promised to obey, and the great leader, who carried almost to the point of profusion the knightly virtue of liberality, took his departure, among the reverent salutations and commendations of his host, and all the crowd of horseboys, tapsters, and such other

knaves in grain and spirit which usually collected at the door of an inn of those days, either to welcome the coming or speed the parting guest.

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## CHAPTER III.

THE morning, which had opened unfavourably, made good all its promises of evil. Every moment the clouds overhead became darker, and the rain poured down in torrents; and for nearly a couple of hours after the departure of the captal and his band, Albert Denyn stood under the projecting doorway of his inn, gazing out in the direction of the forest, whence he expected to see Walleran Urgel make his appearance. His two companions had often tried to engage him in conversation; but though he had replied kindly and with a smile, he had so soon fallen into thought again, that they had at length ceased their efforts, Martin saying to his fellow-trooper, "Leave him, leave him, Grandison! He is just upon the edge of his own land. I recollect you blubbered like a baby at the last look of the Isle of Wight; so he may well be somewhat sad on quitting his native country."

At the end of those two hours, Albert Denyn seemed to suffer his impatience to get the better of him; and, after cross-questioning the people of the inn once more in regard to the old man, he proposed to his two companions to set out in search of the ancient hermitage in the wood, which had been mentioned during the morning in connexion with Walleran Urgel.

Movement, activity, change, enterprise, formed the life of the man-at-arms in that day. Scarcely had the suggestion passed the lips of Albert Denyn, when he and his comrades were in the saddle, and riding on towards the forest; while three or four of the horseboys of the hostelry stood and looked after them as they went, till the tall, strong figures of the three horsemen and their powerful chargers became dim and indistinct, as seen through the heavy rain, and were then lost altogether amid the glades of the forest.

Little did the youth or his comrades care for the weather; but onward they rode for several miles along the

grassy roads which were cut through the wood, with the water splashing up under their horses' feet from the well-soaked ground; till at length Albert, whose eyes were bent forward with a kind of apprehensive feeling which he could not account for, exclaimed, "What is that on there before us, Grandison? It looks like the body of a man lying with the feet among the bushes."

Before his companion could bring his eyes to the spot or make any reply, the youth had spurred forward, and ascertained that his worst apprehensions were right. The corpse of Walleran Urgel lay before him, while the moist ground near the spot was marked with thick pools of blood. Albert sprang from his horse, and raised the head of the unfortunate old man, gazing on his face, in the hope of seeing some signs of animation left. All was still and calm, however; all was ashy pale, except where, from a deep gash upon the brow, a stream of red blood had run across the forehead and dabbled the long gray hair.

"Who can have done this?" exclaimed Martin, riding up, and gazing with a degree of horror upon the bloody countenance of the old man, which he had never felt at the sight of death's ghastly image written in the same red characters upon youth or lusty manhood. "Who can have done this?"

"I know not," answered Albert Denyn, sadly; "but it was a brutal and a savage act. God forgive me if I am unchristian-like; but, I know not why, my mind turns to William Caillet. He has already proved himself base enough; and, were he in Beauvoisis, I should say *he* had done this deed. Poor old man," continued Albert, "it is strange what feelings I have experienced towards him, and could I discover his murderer I would have blood for blood. Where can we carry the body to, I wonder? The Castle of St. Leu cannot be far, and it were well to seek assistance there. Perhaps, after all, life may not be extinct. My own good lord lay for many hours among the dead at Poitiers. You too, Martin and Grandison, go on for a mile or two along this road. Through some of the gaps you will soon see the tall gray towers of an old castle rising upon a hill. You will find a leech there: bring him down with you. I will wait here to keep the wolves from the body."

"No, no!" exclaimed the man called Grandison. "You know the country better than we do, Albert. Go on with Martin; I will stay with the corpse."

As he spoke he dismounted, and Albert, again springing on his horse, led the way in search of the chateau of St. Leu, which he was not long in discovering.

In the mean while Grandison stood by the side of the body with his horse's bridle over his arm. At first he gazed upon it with those grave and sombre feelings which the solitary presence of death naturally produces even in the mind of the rude and uncultivated. Who can stand and contemplate the deserted habitation of the immortal soul without asking himself strange and moving questions regarding the mysterious link between spirit and matter, regarding all the warm relationships of life, and all the cold corruption of the tomb, regarding the final state of both the mortal and immortal parts of our mixed nature? Who, in short, is there who can so look upon death without applying the sight before him to his own heart, without employing the dark hieroglyphic as a key to read something of his own destiny?

Such feelings were, indeed, to a degree, present in the breast of the stout trooper as he stood beside the dead; but his was not a character to encourage or analyze them. Even as he gazed in musing meditation he began to whistle a light air, and soon turned his eyes away, looking up and down the road, and every now and then mingling an articulate word or two of the song with the tune which poured from his compressed lips:

"The hooded crow, the hooded crow,  
Sat on the tree by the river side,  
And up and down the boat did row,  
As the lover sat by the lady's side."

So sang Grandison, and then broke off and whistled some more bars of the air:

"The lover sat by the lady's side,  
And much he talk'd of love's soft law,  
And nobody heard what the dame replied;  
But the hooded crow still answer'd 'Caw.'"

And again he whistled:

"The boat glided down the river's course,  
And the lovers were gay as gay could be;  
But the hooded crow, with his accents hoarse,  
Followed them still from tree to tree."

"The boat glided quick o'er the glassy wave,  
To where the waterfall broke the flood;  
And at night the lovers were still as the grave;  
But the hooded crow was there at his food."

And once more Grandison whistled, and began to march up and down as if on duty at an outpost.

His music, however, was soon interrupted by various discordant shouts coming apparently from one of the side alleys of the wood which he and his companions had passed in their advance.

"Ay, here they come," said he, thinking that Albert and Martin were bringing down some assistance from the castle; but a few moments showed him a party of country people, comprising a number of boys, advancing upon him with furious cries and gesticulations, and evidently regarding him with feelings of enmity and wrath. His surprise, which was not slight, increased when they came near, on hearing nine or ten voices accuse him loudly of the murder of the old man!

As soon as he found that this was the case, however, Grandison sprang into the saddle and grasped his lance, exclaiming, "Keep off, my men; keep off! You are all fools; but, if your folly bring you too near me, you may get a broken head."

"Seize upon him, seize upon him," cried an old man, advancing from the crowd, in whom Grandison recognised their somewhat doubtful guide of the day before: "but there were more of them," he continued; "I saw them with my own eyes. But seize upon this one, at least, even though the others have escaped."

How the matter might have ended, had Grandison been left alone to deal with the undisciplined mob that surrounded him, cannot, of course, be told. It is very probable that they might have made good their object, yet not impossible that the stout man-at-arms might have drubbed them all; but, in the midst of the outcry, the sound of galloping horse was heard; and, to the good trooper's great satisfaction, his companion Martin and Albert Denyn were seen coming down the green road at full speed, accompanied by a considerable body of horsemen. At Albert Denyn's right hand was a noble-looking man, considerably past the middle age, whom Grandison had never beheld before, but whose name he soon learned from the exclamations of the people, who shouted, as soon as they beheld him, "The Lord of St. Leu! the Lord of St. Leu!"

As the party came near, the nobleman advanced more rapidly than the rest, exclaiming, "What is all this! Why do you attack the trooper, my friends? Stand

back there, I say! By the Lord, Jacques Bonhomme, I will teach you to hear!" and he struck a young peasant, who was pressing forward upon Grandison, a blow with his clinched fist, which levelled him to the ground. The young man rose cowed, but sullen, while one of the others exclaimed, in an humble tone, "Here has been a terrible murder, my lord, and we only sought to seize the murderer, and bring him up to the castle."

"That's the man! that's the man!" cried another voice.

"But there were two others, there were two others," shouted a third from the crowd. "Thibalt saw them, Thibalt saw them," said a fourth.

"Who saw them?" exclaimed the Lord of St. Leu. "Who do you say?"

"Old Thibalt, my noble lord; old Thibalt la Rue," cried the man who had last spoken.

"He saw it, did he?" demanded the Lord of St. Leu in return. "That is important evidence. Stand forward, old Thibalt. Nay, sneak not away out behind. Come forward, I say. They call you 'cunning Thibalt,' I think. Now let me see whether you can be honest, Thibalt, and give me a straightforward answer. You saw the people that murdered this poor old man. Now point out to me, if you see them here, any of the persons concerned in the deed."

Thibalt was evidently disinclined to give his personal testimony before the Lord of St. Leu. He hesitated, he stammered: he was quite sure, he said, of Grandison being one of the murderers, and he then pointed to Albert Denyn and Martin as the two others.

"And you saw them commit the murder?" rejoined the Lord of St. Leu, waving his hand for Martin to hold his peace.

"Not exactly commit the murder, my good and noble lord," replied the old man, in a low and humble tone; "but I saw them near the place."

"But when? but when?" exclaimed the Lord of St. Leu, sharply. "I see them near the place too, and I see *you* there; but that is no proof that either you or they committed the murder. When did you first behold them near the place?"

"About two hours ago, my good lord," replied Thibalt, "just at the time I heard the old man's cries for help."

"And so you were two whole hours," said the Lord

of St. Leu, "before you brought the help for which he cried."

"My lord, I could not get the people together sooner," answered the old man.

"Why came you not to the castle?" demanded the Lord of St. Leu, fiercely. "Why went you not to the village? Take him, Bertrand and Hugh. Bind his arms tight, and away with him to the chateau of Monsieur de Plessy: for it is on his lands he lives. Tell him what has happened, and what you have heard. He will easily perceive that this old fox evidently knows more of the murder than he will admit. You can say, too, that I know his charge against these men to be false; for that, hearing there was an armed party in the village, and not being aware that it was the train of the noble Capital de Buch, I sent down to watch all its movements. Yet, stay; this old man is reputed rich, is not he?"

"Oh, that he is! that he is!" cried a dozen voices from the peasantry around.

"Then I will deal with him myself," said the Lord of St. Leu, dryly; "take him to the castle. Has not the leech come down yet? But the old man is evidently dead."

"I see the leech at the end of the alley, my noble lord," said one of the retainers. "He seems to put no great faith in his own powers, he is coming so slow."

"Who can have done this deed?" continued the Lord of St. Leu, gazing on the body, while two of his attendants carried off the old man Thibalt, with a pale face, towards the chateau of St. Leu.

"Have you no idea? Can you form no suspicion, good youth?" he continued, addressing Albert Denyn. "You say that the murdered man accompanied the capital's train out of Touraine. Is there any one on whom your suspicions would turn?"

"I know no one, my good lord," replied Albert, "in this part of the world, who could have any motive for such a bloody act. That old man, Thibalt, indeed, seemed to have known him in days of yore, and referred to some enmity between them. But, then, such feeble hands as his could not have done this deed. There was one other, indeed, whose enmity this poor gentleman had provoked; but he must be far absent. Were he here, I should say he was the man who did it."

"Name him! name him!" said the Lord of St. Leu, in his usual quick and stern manner.

"He means that scoundrel William Caillet!" exclaimed Martin. "A serf, my good lord, who tried—"

"I know, I know!" rejoined the Lord of St. Leu. "My good friend the Count de Mauvinet sent me a messenger to tell me all, and bid me keep a strict watch in Beauvoisis, lest this base villain should seek refuge in these parts. So," he continued, turning to Albert Denyn, "you judge that, were he here, we might reasonably suspect him of the murder of this old man?"

"I do, my lord, I do," replied Albert, boldly. "Poor Walleran Urgel crossed him in his purposes, and by his timely coming saved my noble lord's daughter from the brutal violence of that very Caillet. It was an act which he would not soon forgive, and were he in Beauvoisis, I should believe he is the man who has done this."

"He is in Beauvoisis," said the Lord of St. Leu, with a dark smile. "I have certain information that he is here. Not many a mile distant from this very spot, he has been seen twice by those who know him well; and even now my people are watching for him, that he may not escape the punishment of his offences. Doubtless we shall soon discover whether this crime also is to be added to the number. What say you, leech; is the man dead?"

The surgeon, who had been brought down from the castle, and who, during the few last words spoken by the Lord of St. Leu, had been examining carefully the body of Walleran Urgel, now raised his head to reply, with a look of great gravity and sagacity. "My lord," he answered, "it is a very difficult thing to say what is death, and what is not."

"Pshaw!" cried the Lord of St. Leu; "I ask you will that man ever get up from that grass and walk?"

"Not till the day of judgment," replied the leech.

"Then the man is dead!" exclaimed the Lord of St. Leu. "Out upon philosophy! It is *truth* I want. Take the body and carry it to the castle. You too, good youth, and your companions, had better speed on at once after the noble Captal de Buch, as he left you to look for this old man, to whom you can now render no farther service. Tell him what has happened, and say that, if he wishes to investigate the matter himself, a hearty welcome awaits him at St. Leu."

"But, my lord," replied Albert Denyn, "the object of  
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our stay was to obtain some papers which this poor gentlemen had promised to my good lord the capital."

"Let the body be searched," interrupted the Lord of St. Leu. "Let the body be searched; so that you can make your own report, youth, to your lord."

The corpse was searched accordingly; but nothing of any kind was found among the clothes; and Albert Denyn, satisfied that poor Walleran Urgel had been plundered as well as murdered, took his leave of the Lord of St. Leu, and, according to the directions he had received, rode on to rejoin the capital.

The body of Walleran Urgel was raised by the attendants of the Lord of St. Leu, and carried towards the castle, while some of the peasantry followed the nobleman and his train, as they rode slowly back, and the rest remained gathered together round the spot, discussing the events that had taken place, and secretly declaring among themselves that the real murderers had been suffered to depart, and the crime, in order to shield them, had been attributed to those who had nothing to do with it. Such were the suspicions whispered among the crowd; but there was one who ventured to go farther than any of his comrades. The young peasant, whom the Lord of St. Leu had somewhat brutally struck down, clinched his fist tight as he saw the nobleman and his train depart, and muttered between his teeth, "The time will come."

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#### CHAPTER IV.

SOME time had passed; the weather had cleared up again; the heavens were soft and bright; the sun shone out; and, though there was a light winter's mist lying in the low grounds, it scarcely interrupted the eye that ran over the scene around, but only served to soften the principal features of the landscape, and to give a vague vastness of the whole by blending the distance insensibly with the sky.

Upon one of the highest hills in that part of the country, which, though not mountainous, is, as the reader well knows, rich in graceful undulations, stood a small

chapel, with a cottage, tenanted by the officiating priest, hard by. It was reached by a winding path issuing from the deep woods below; but the chapel itself stood bare upon a little esplanade, overtopping everything around it; and high above the little belfry appeared the symbol of man's salvation, at the foot of which lay the old emblem of an anchor, meaning, perhaps, to represent Faith arising out of Hope.

On the day we speak of, various groups of peasantry were seen winding up the tortuous road. They consisted almost altogether of men—hard-featured, gaunt, hollow-eyed peasants—on whose faces as well as on whose garments appeared sad signs of misery and want, labour, exposure, and distress. Such traces were common to the countenances of all; but every different shade of expression was there besides, and, by the aspect, one might see how each man bore his burden. There was the downcast, eager gaze upon the ground, which seemed despairingly to ask the stones for bread. There was the gay and laughing misery which sets dependency at defiance. There was the calm, firm look of resolute endurance. There was the wild, yet sullen stare of fierce discontent, seeking the object of its hatred from under the bent eyebrows. Some of them spoke together as they came; some of them chattered quickly and gesticulated vehemently; some advanced in deep silence, buried, apparently, in the thoughts of their own sorrow. The object of all, however, was the same. A whisper had gone through the miserable peasantry in the neighbourhood of Clermont, Beauvais, and St. Leu, that a meeting of some of those who suffered most severely under the horrors and privations of the time was to take place, for the purpose of bewailing their misery and praying to God in that chapel for some alleviation of the load which had fallen upon them. With whom the rumour originated no one appeared to know, but it seemed to have been universal through the country, and the day and the hour had been named exactly to every one. No one had been summoned, no one had been called; but all had heard that such a meeting was to be held, and all went to join their sorrows to those of men who suffered like themselves.

The good old priest had not been made aware that any such assembly was proposed, though the poor of the neighbourhood had often asked him to petition God

for some relief, and the worthy man had never failed to do so, both in his secret orisons and in the public service of the chapel. He was not a little surprised, then, to see from his windows, about the hour of mass, so great a number of the peasantry approaching his lonely habitation; for his ordinary congregation amounted rarely to more than twenty or thirty, and now two or three hundred men were evidently climbing the hills.

"Poor people," he said to himself; "poor people, their misery brings them to God. A sad pity is it that gratitude for happiness is not as strong a motive as terror or expectation; but so it is with our earthly nature. We must be driven, rather than led. We need the scourge of sorrow, and forget the Almighty too soon in the very prosperity which he has given."

Thus saying, he hastened into the chapel, which soon overflowed with people, and the mass began, and proceeded reverently to a close. In a prayer to God, introduced, perhaps, somewhat irregularly, the priest spoke of the sorrows of the peasantry of France, of the misery which they had so long endured, of the scourges of all kinds under which they suffered, and he besought some speedy and effectual relief.

The multitude listened to the prayer; but, if the ordinary service of the mass had soothed and consoled them, the mention of their disastrous situation seemed to revive all their anguish; and when they quitted the chapel, and had assembled on the little esplanade which we have mentioned, their minds were full of their wretchedness, and many real and many fancied causes of discontent were busy in their imaginations.

As they issued forth, they broke into separate groups, according as they found friends or acquaintances, and each little knot went on to detail griefs and privations enough to make the heart sick and the blood run cold. Gradually, however, the more angry and vehement speakers drew the attention of listeners from the groups around. The whole numbers collected were speedily gathered into three or four parties. The voice of lamentation and sorrow was changed into complaint and murmuring, and curses deep and strong against the oppressors burst from the lips of the oppressed.

The good priest had mingled with them to sooth and to console; but, when he heard the turn which the people's words were taking, he endeavoured to pacify and

to calm, and even ventured upon expostulation and reproof. He showed that many of the statements of wrongs suffered were as false as the miseries endured were true; and he was endeavouring to prove that some of the charges brought against the nobles were unfounded, when a loud voice proceeding from a man who had not yet spoken, stopped him in the midst.

"Get thee hence," said a tall peasant, covered from head to foot with the gray cloak of a shepherd, the hood of which had hung far over his face, concealing the features from view. "Get thee hence, good priest! This is no moment for thee; thou art a man of peace, and hast done thy mission. Get thee hence, I say. But who is this riding so fast up the hill? The bailiff of the Lord of St. Leu, with one of his archers, come to say that we shall not even tell our miseries to God, I suppose."

All eyes were now turned in the direction of the road, on which was seen approaching a stout, well-fed, portly-looking man on horseback, followed by an archer on foot; the latter, besides his usual arms, bore a partisan on his shoulder; and as far as beard and ugliness went, he was as forbidding a personage, and bore as formidable an appearance as can well be conceived. Nor was the countenance of the bailiff of the Lord of St. Leu very prepossessing; not that the features were in themselves bad, but there was withal a look of insolent and domineering pride, a fat scorn for all things more miserable and meager than himself, which certainly was not at all calculated to conciliate the affection of the starving peasantry of the neighbourhood. Thus, as he rode up, many a murmured comment on his insolent tyranny passed through the people, who watched his approach.

Such are the men who make their lords hated; for very, very often the detestation of their inferiors falls upon persons in high station, without any actual oppression on their own part. Nevertheless, let them not think themselves ill-treated if the acts of their agents draw down upon their head the enmity of those whom they have not themselves trampled on; for power and wealth bring with them a great responsibility, and demand at our hands a watchfulness over the conduct of others as well as our own; so that the man whose servant uses his authority for the purpose of oppression is little less culpable than the oppressor himself.

The Lord of St. Leu, as times went, was neither a tyrant nor an unjust man; his morality was not very strict; and in cases of offences committed within his jurisdiction, though he certainly did not suffer the guilty to escape, yet he contrived, when it was possible, to make the punishment profitable to himself. He was fonder, in short, of fines than of bloodshed, and preferred making a culprit pay in pocket rather than in person. To a certain degree he was kind to the poor, often supplied them with food, and commiserated their distresses; but he was quick and severe when opposed, and stern in his general demeanour. His greatest crime was the license which he allowed his inferior officers, who committed many a wrong and many a cruelty without his knowledge, but it cannot be said without his fault.

Among the most detested of these subordinate tyrants was the bailiff of St. Leu; not that he was more cruel than others, but that he was more insolent in his cruelty, for people will bear tyranny more easily than scorn; and the secret why some of the greatest tyrants that ever lived have gone on to the end of their lives uninjured and unopposed, has generally been that they gained to their side the vanity of those whom they oppressed, rather than arrayed it against them.

The peasantry assembled before the chapel on the top of the hill drew back on either side as the bailiff advanced, but without showing any disposition to fly; and, indeed, had he examined closely, he might have seen some cause for apprehension in the sullen looks of some, and the fierce, wild expression of others. In those days, however, the idea of anything like resistance on the part of the serfs had never entered into the mind of the nobles of France. They regarded the villeins, as they called them, as the mere creatures of their will. If they treated them well, it was merely from general kindness of heart and natural good feeling; if they abstained from oppressing and actually ill-using them, when they had any inclination so to do, it was simply on account of some respect for the few laws which gave them a scanty protection; but no idea that the worm might turn on him who trampled it ever entered into the calculation of the lords of the soil. A terrible day of retribution, however, was now coming, and the bailiff of the Lord of St. Leu was the one to hurry it on.

"How now, Jacques Bonhommes," he exclaimed,

"what are you doing here in such a crowd? Why get ye not to your labour? What are ye doing here in idleness?"

"We have been praying God to deliver us from evil," replied a voice from the crowd.

"Away with you! away with you!" cried the insolent officer; "think you that God will attend to such a scum as you are! But first let me see who you have got among you; march down that road, every man of you, one by one."

"Why should we do that?" demanded one of the boldest among the peasantry; "or why should you meddle with us when we are praying to the only ear that will hear us?"

"Insolent villain!" exclaimed the bailiff, striking him a slight blow with a truncheon he carried in his hand. "Dare you put questions to me?"

The man drew back with a frowning brow, but made no reply; and the bailiff continued, "I will answer you, however. Here, archer, take my horse;" and throwing the rein to his follower, he slowly dismounted from his horse, while a little group at the other side of the crowd were seen eagerly conversing together.

"Now, then," said the bailiff, "pass on before me one by one; for there is a criminal among you who, having first committed felony against his lord, has fled hither to add murder to his other crimes. You all know him well, and his name is William Caillet. Come, quick, pass before me, one by one, and each man let me see his face as he goes by."

The people paused and hesitated; but at that moment the person who had spoken to the priest, and who was, as we have said, covered from head to foot with a gray shepherd's cloak and hood, advanced slowly and deliberately from the other side of the crowd, as if to lead the way in passing before the bailiff of St. **Len**. Several others of those who were near followed close behind him; and when he approached the place where the officer stood, the bailiff, although there was something in the man's demeanour which evidently struck and disconcerted him, exclaimed aloud, "Come, come, throw back your hood!"

The peasant made no reply, but took another step forward, and then, turning suddenly face to face with the bailiff, he threw the cloak off entirely, and stood out be-

fore the eyes of all the very William Caillet whom the officer had demanded.

"Now, what want you with me?" demanded Caillet.

"To apprehend you for a felony," replied the officer, boldly.

"Then take that for thy pains," exclaimed Caillet, striking him a blow in the face, which made him reel back. "Cutthroat slave of a bloody tyrant, take that, and that, and that!" and, drawing the sword with which he was armed, he plunged it again and again into the body of the bailiff, before the unhappy man, taken by surprise, had power to do more than grasp the hilt of his sword convulsively. Ere he could pluck it from the sheath, his spirit had fled forever, and, almost at the same instant, the peasant called Jacques Morne had sprung upon the archer, exclaiming,

"Tear him to pieces! Down with the monster! Down with the nobles, and all the bloody tyrants who keep us without bread!"

The archer, however, was more upon his guard than his officer had been, and, shortening his partisan, he struck Morne a blow upon the head, which, though it did not kill him, laid him bleeding and senseless at his feet. Ere he could do more, Caillet, seeing that the bailiff could offer no farther resistance to any one, turned also to the archer, and strode over the prostrate body of Morne. The soldier aimed a fierce stroke at him likewise; but Caillet was far superior to him both in skill and strength, and, parrying it, in a moment he struck him a blow upon the shoulder, which would have cleft him to the waist had he not been protected by his brigandine. Notwithstanding that defence, it wounded him severely, and brought him at once upon his knees; but Caillet drew back with a scornful smile; and exclaiming to the peasants, "If he ever rise again, it is your fault," he thrust his sword back into the sheath.

The people rushed upon the unfortunate man in a crowd, bore him down to the earth, and in a moment they had literally torn him to pieces.

The priest placed his hands over his eyes for an instant to shut out the dreadful sight; but, taking them away again, he raised them up to heaven, exclaiming, "Oh, man of blood, man of blood, you have brought down a new curse upon the land!"

"I have brought it deliverance," cried Caillet, in his

voice of thunder. "Get thee to prayers, good priest; get thee to prayers. Pray unto God for his blessing upon the course which has been begun this day: pray for strength to those arms that are now raised to deliver their country: pray for resolution to those hearts which have undertaken the great work of restoring to mankind the liberty which is man's birthright!"

The few words which had passed between the priest and Caillet had afforded the people time to think for a moment over the act which had just been done, or, rather, to see clearly the situation in which they had so suddenly been placed; and strange and terrible were the contending sensations excited in their bosoms. The long habit of submission and fear of their lords had given way, for an instant, to the impulse of momentary passion; but as soon as the deed to which the passion had prompted was accomplished, the feeling of awe returned, and with it the terror of punishment. They recoiled in a mass from the mangled body of the archer; and they gazed with feelings of horror and affright on the bloody work they had made.

Quick, however, to catch and take advantage of the passing feelings of the moment, Caillet perceived at once what was passing in the minds of the peasantry: he saw that apprehension of their lord's vengeance was, for the time, uppermost, and he determined to use that very apprehension to counteract its natural effects. He looked on them sternly, then, for a short space, while they turned their eyes from the dead bodies towards him.

"See what you have done," he said, in a voice which was heard by every one present; "see what you have done. You have slain one of the Lord of St. Leu's archers. You have torn him to pieces. You cannot hide the deed, for too many have witnessed it. You cannot justify it, for he will hear no justification: he will neither pardon nor spare. To-morrow his men-at-arms and his archers will be among you; and there is not a man here, but myself, who will not be hanging up to some of the oak trees of the forest before sunset to-morrow night. You have done a terrible and unheard-of thing: a thing that was never known in France before. It is true, you have been goaded to desperation; it is true, you have been trampled on, and misused, and ground to dust; it is true, you have been

kept in starvation and misery by men no better than yourselves ; it is true, you have seen your wives and children die of want and cold, that your lives have been one endless sorrow, and your existence but a length of drudgery and pain ; it is true, that human patience could endure no more ; that the insolence of your tyrants added insult, and scorn, and contempt, and cruelty to wretchedness, and penury, and affliction ! But will your persecutors spare you on that account ? Will they have pity because you were driven by wrongs that no creatures on the earth could bear, under which a timid hare would find courage, against which a worm would turn ? Oh, no, no ! deceive yourselves not, my friends ; they will neither spare nor forgive. They know the interests of their own tyranny too well : they know that, if once you find resistance in any case successful, you will regain your rights and liberties, that you will take back with a strong hand that of which they have robbed you ; that their fine castles, and glorious lands, and rich furniture, and dainty food, will all be yours ; that you will no longer consent to be oppressed and trampled on ; that the rod with which they have ruled you is broken, and their power gone forever. They know it, I say, they know it ; and why do they know it ? because they know that you are many, and they are few ; that you are strong by endurance and labour, and that they are weak ; that you are brave, and that they are cowardly ; ay, cowardly, I say. See how a handful of the English scattered their millions like a flock of sheep at Poitiers. See how a few bands of adventurers ravage the land without their daring to oppose them. So would you scatter them if you chose it ; so may you ravage their lands, if you do not prefer to submit your necks to the halter, and pay for the death of yon minion of tyranny with your lives. To them, to them alone, is attributable all the evils which we endure, first to their oppression, then to their folly, then to their cowardice. Will you stand tamely, and bend your heads to the bloodthirsty monsters who have devoured you, or who will boldly follow me to punish them for their misdeeds ? to burn their castles, to ravage their lands, to smite the smiter, and to feed upon the fruits that they have torn from you ?”

“ We will ! we will !” cried Jacques Morne ; and, excited to a pitch of wild enthusiasm, such as they had ;

never before felt, by the vehement oratory of Caillet, a number of the peasants echoed, "We will! we will!"

"Will you follow me," reiterated Caillet, "to avenge the wrongs that you have suffered, and to taste all the pleasures that have been denied to you! Will you follow me to wipe out in blood and flame the memory of long years of suffering and oppression! Choose your course, and choose at once: and think not that I try to lead you to violence in order to shield my own head, for there is not a man here who is not even now in greater danger than I am. I have known how to protect myself, and I can protect myself still, against all the lords in the land. They cannot hurt me, they can do me no harm; but I ask you, Is there one man here, after what you have done to-day, who can ever lay down his head in safety! Are you not aware that the rope is round your necks! Are you not aware that it must be your own hands and your own knives that cut it!"

"We are! we are!" exclaimed a hundred voices round: "we will follow you, we will follow you to death."

"No, not to death," cried Caillet, in an exulting tone; "to life! to liberty! to enjoyment! to revenge! to everything that man can hope for and desire! Oh, that bloody spectacle!" he continued, addressing the dead body at his foot, "I thank thee! for the sight of thee has roused my country to shake off the chains that bound her! I thank thee! for the sight of thee has given back to my countrymen their hearts of lions. Let us spend no more time in vain words. I long ago, my men, and you this day, have done deeds that bar us from all retreat. We must conquer our liberty or die. Let us strike, then, at once; let us this very hour perform some other great act, which may fill the hearts of our enemies with fear."

"But," said one of those timid counsellors who so often, in moments of excitement and enthusiasm, throw a damp upon the brightest ardour, "but we are here not more than two hundred men, without arms, without assistance."

"But two hundred men!" exclaimed Caillet, with a frowning brow and a loud voice; "I tell you that by my voice speak all the peasantry of France. I tell you that the castle which I will set in flames this night—ay, though it be perched upon a rock, and defended by

triple walls—the castle which I will set on fire this night shall serve but as a beacon to call forth the millions of the nation to join with us in punishing their oppressors. No arms, did the man say? Have you not knives—have you not the knives with which the commons of France have more than once routed the enemies of their land? Have you not scythes, weapons more terrible than all the lances of your enemies? Let each man seize his scythe, then, and follow me; I will teach him to mow down harvests which he has never reaped before. Take such arms as are nearest at hand, for the time being! and we will soon snatch from the hands of our enemies the swords they have too long used against ourselves. No assistance, did he say? I tell you you shall have the best assistance in the world; you, the peasantry of France, shall be aided by all the citizens of France. The people of Paris are already in revolt, and the commons of every other town only wait our signal to rise as one man. Then, then a few thousand nobles, cooped up in their strongholds, and besieged by millions of their injured countrymen, shall pay the penalty of their long and terrible crimes, washing out in blood the stains they have fixed upon the land; and may destruction fall upon them all, except such as frankly come over and join the people. Now, then, let those who will, follow me! for we have already wasted much time; and this night you shall have the first taste of that glorious revenge of which you shall drink deep, day by day, till the whole be accomplished. But, if there be one man among you who has not been injured by these nobles; if there be one man whose children have been suffered to know plenty, or one even who thinks that, after the death of that archer, we can obtain peace and forgiveness, let him stay away, and take part with those whom we devote to destruction. We want none but such as have willing hearts and ready hands; for the multitudes throughout all France that are prepared to join us—the thousands that I have seen on the banks of the Loire, cursing and scoffing at the coward nobles as they fled from Poitiers, will put all resistance at defiance, and in a few days make us masters of the country. Whither shall we go? what place shall we first attack? Let it be the castle of St. Leu; it is strong and full of men, and will be a glorious conquest. There, too, is confined good old Thibalt la Rue, whom they have accused of a murder

that he did not commit, simply because they knew he wished the people to rise and throw off their tyranny."

"No, no!" cried a voice, "he is not there: they moved him from St. Leu nearly a fortnight ago, and took him to Plessy en Val, because he lived upon those lands. He is in the tower of the Lord of Plessy, by the stream."

"Let us go thither, then," exclaimed Caillet; "that will be an easy conquest, and perhaps we may have time to take the castle of St. Leu also before night."

Every strong feeling of the human heart is more or less infectious; and, unless guarded against its influence by some counteracting passion in our own bosom, we can hardly help participating in any sensation which we see powerfully displayed by another. Every word, every look, every gesture of Caillet was full of strength, and confidence, and determination; and there was not one person in the crowd that surrounded him who did not feel his own energies rise, his own fears decrease, his own courage glow, as he listened to and marked the extraordinary man who stood before him. Even the cold counsellor, who had been the first to think of difficulties and impediments, was carried away by the words he heard, and exclaimed with the rest, "Lead on, lead on! We will follow you."

"Forward, then," exclaimed Caillet, "forward towards Plessy; and, as we go, let us call out our fellow-men to aid us in our enterprise."

Thus saying, he led the way down the hill with a rapid step. The crowd followed him to a man; and no one but the good old priest gazed after them as they rushed away into the paths of the forest.

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## CHAPTER V.

THERE was a man singing at his work, and two or three children playing about the door, while a mother sat within rocking a wicker cradle with her foot, and twirling the busy distaff with her hands, in the little village of peasants' huts which lay at the distance of about a mile from the tower of Plessy en Val. The short af-  
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ternoon was drawing towards its close, and the evening light of a bright day in the beginning of the year shone calm upon the peaceful scene, the woods swept up over the neighbouring hills, the tall donjon of the castle was seen rising over the trees, and there was a sort of misty calmness in the aspect of all things, which communicated a sweet and tranquil feeling to the mind.

Merrily worked on the contented labourer, watching the gambols of his babes, and speaking, from time to time, a word to his wife within. Suddenly some unusual sound caused the man to look up and turn towards the road which came out of the wood. The noise was a very peculiar one: neither cry, nor shout, nor human voice was heard; but there was the quick tramp of many feet, blended with the buzz of a number of people speaking in a low tone.

"What is all this?" said the peasant, raising himself to his full height, and leaning on the axe with which he had been hewing into shape a large mass of oak. "What is all this, Janette? Here's a crowd of several hundred men coming down, as fast as they can come without running; a number of the good folks of St. Leu I see, and some of the people from Beauvais; there is Jacques Morne, too, and long Phillipe of Argenton, and some of the serfs of Beaulieu; but who is that at their head, with a sword in his hand? On my life, I believe it is the felon, William Caillet! They must be about some mischief."

A minute more brought the first men of the crowd to the entrance of the village, and the loud voice of Caillet exclaimed, in a tone of command, "Take your axe on your shoulder, and join us to deliver France from her tyrants!"

"I beg your pardon, Master Caillet," replied the man to whom he had addressed himself; "I never join people without knowing what they are going to be about."

"To deliver France, I tell you," answered Caillet, sternly.

"Ay, ay," cried the peasant; "but how? How are you going to begin?"

"By burning down the castle of Plessy, and setting free good old Thibalt la Rue," growled forth Jacques Morne. "Waste not many words upon him, Caillet: I told you all the people here are willing slaves."

"I am an honest man, at all events," replied the

peasant, boldly, "and I will have no hand in burning down the castle of my good lord, or setting free an old rogue who never left us at peace while he was among us. Think what you are about, my men," he continued, addressing the followers of Caillet. "Think what you are about, and where these people are leading you."

"Take that for your pains," cried Jacques Morne, plunging a knife into his throat; and, as the unfortunate man fell back, weltering in his blood, Caillet exclaimed, "So die all the willing slaves of the tyrants of our country! Disperse through the houses; gather all the arms and the tools that you can get, and let us on as fast as possible."

In a moment every cabin was invaded, and a general pillage began; some men were found in the houses who willingly joined the insurgents, some, it may be supposed, followed the example of the peasant whom the insurgents had first met, and more than once a scream, or a deep groan, or a supplication for mercy, issued from the doors of the huts, telling how well the orders which had been given were obeyed. When the crowd again began to move on, flames were bursting from various parts of the village, and a few women and children were seen flying in terror and agony towards the woods. It required but five minutes to change a sweet and peaceful place into a scene of blood and devastation.

Caillet himself had entered none of the houses, but stood for a short time in the midst of the road, with his right hand still grasping his naked sword, and his left pressed tight upon his brow. At length he shouted to his followers to come forth; and as they obeyed that loud and echoing voice, he led them on without looking behind.

Forward they rushed through a narrow, winding lane, with a small stream crossing it in the bottom of the valley; but ere the multitude had proceeded half a mile, swelling their numbers by some peasants who had been working in the fields, they were suddenly met by the white-haired Lord of Plessy and three attendants, galloping down at full speed towards the village, the flames of which had been observed from the watch-tower of the castle. The good old baron was all eagerness to give aid to his people in the calamity under which he thought they were suffering, and he was within twenty or thirty yards of Caillet and his followers before he saw the threatening aspect of the crowd.

At that moment, however, the thundering voice of the leader of the insurrection exclaimed, somewhat too soon for his own purpose, "This is one of the tyrants! Upon him, upon him, my men, and tear him to pieces!" And he himself rushed forward to seize the bridle of the old lord.

But one of the nobleman's attendants spurred forward his horse before his master, exclaiming, "Fly, my lord, fly! We are too few to resist." The Lord of Plessy and the rest, confused and astounded, and guessing but vaguely what had occurred, turned their horses and fled at full speed towards the castle, while the furious mob darted upon the gallant servant who had devoted himself for his master, and, ere he could strike three strokes in his own defence, had pulled him from his horse and dashed his brains out with an axe.

Caillet caught the beast the man had ridden by the bridle, and sprang at once into the saddle, exclaiming, "Follow me quickly! we must not lose our advantage. If you delay a moment you will have to choose another leader;" and thus saying, he galloped on at full speed after the Lord of Plessy and his attendants.

The crowd who came behind quickened their pace, and hurried forward as fast as possible; but they could not keep pace with Caillet, and at the turn of the road which led up towards the castle lost sight of him altogether. Some anxiety and apprehension took possession of them, and made them waver for a moment; but Jacques Morne, waving a heavy axe over his head, exclaimed, "Run, men, run! Why do you pause? If you hesitate he will be killed before we are there."

Onward they rushed again, and in two minutes more the barbican of the castle was before them. The sight that they there saw renewed their courage and roused them into fury. Caillet himself had reached the place almost at the same moment with its lord, and, to ensure that the gates of the outwork should not be shut, had sprung from the horse which bore him, and plunged his sword into the animal's chest. Falling dead under the archway, the carcass blocked up the way, and both served as a rampart for the bold man who stood there unsupported against the armed followers of the feudal chief, and prevented the portcullis from falling completely, or the heavy door beyond from being closed.

All was confusion and bustle in the gate, though only

a few of the usual guards had as yet arrived. Some were endeavouring to drag the horse away, some were striking at Caillet with swords and partisans, some were calling for crossbows and quarrels to shoot him as he stood; but as the head of the rushing multitude appeared and came on with a wild yell of rage and exultation, a panic seized upon the soldiery, and, abandoning the barbican and the drawbridge, they sought for safety within the walls of the castle itself.

"Victory! victory!" shouted Caillet: "we have won the first triumph. On, on, my men, and the place will soon be ours."

The crowd rushed forward; the portcullis, which had partly fallen, was soon raised; the barbican was rifled of the various weapons it contained; and, defended by some shields and casques which had belonged to the soldiery of the place, Caillet and seven of his followers passed the drawbridge in spite of the arrows and quarrels which were now showered thickly upon them from the walls. Each man bore with him a load of fagots and wood, which had been found in the outwork, laid up as the warder's winter provision; and a pile was soon raised against the chief gate of the castle, as high as could be reached. No light, however, was to be had for some minutes; and when, at length, one of the peasants, with a flint and steel, contrived to kindle a flame, an arrow from a projecting turret struck his shoulder and pierced him to the heart. A loud shout of satisfaction burst from the man who had discharged the shaft, and some signs of terror showed themselves among the insurgents at the first appearance of death among themselves. But Caillet boldly thrust himself forward into the very aim of the archer, and, shaking his clinched hand at him, exclaimed, "In this fire will I burn thy heart! Revenge, revenge, my friends! The blood of our brother calls out to us for revenge. Let us spread round the castle while the flame burns down the gate; perhaps we may find some speedier way in."

His wish was but to occupy the peasantry while the fire did its work; for he knew well that men unaccustomed to warfare are with difficulty brought to wait in inactivity while any preliminary operation is carried on, especially when they are exposed to danger during the delay. Part, then, he left to watch the burning of the gate under cover of the barbican, the rest he led round

the castle, affecting to seek another point of entrance. In the mean while, the Lord of Plessy and his attendants, astounded by what had occurred, confused, terrified, and utterly unprepared to offer vigorous resistance to an attack which had never been anticipated, lost much time in wild and hurried consultations; and it was not till the fire had made considerable progress that they thought of pouring down water upon it through the machicoulis. Several minutes more were spent in bringing it up from the well to the tower above the gate, and then it was unfortunately found that the stream fell beyond the spot where the flame was raging, and the water flowed away into the moat.

By this time it was evident that, notwithstanding the plating of iron, the woodwork of the door was beginning to ignite, and another hurried and confused consultation took place in which some one proposed to parley with the assailants, and try to make some terms. The old lord himself, however, refused to hear of such a disgraceful act; and it was resolved to open the gate for a moment, and, rushing out, endeavour to throw the flaming pile into the ditch.

Unhappily for the besieged, at the instant this determination was executed Caillet himself had returned from his progress round the walls. He had passed the drawbridge, with Jacques Morne and another, to see what had been the effect of the flame upon the doors, and, notwithstanding the intense heat, was standing almost in the blaze, when the gate was thrown open, and the old lord, with ten or twelve men, rushed out, scattering the fire before them. For a moment Caillet and his companions were driven back some steps; but his quick and daring mind instantly conceived the object of the enemy, and he determined to turn their attempt to his own advantage. Suddenly those who were watching under the barbican lost sight of him and his comrades in the midst of the smoke and flame, but the next moment the bold insurgents and their leader appeared again, striking on all sides, and literally surrounded by fire and enemies. At the same time the voice of Caillet was heard shouting aloud, "The gate is won! The gate is won! On, on, my men, the castle is ours!"

With a wild yell of triumph the multitude rushed across the bridge, and, bearing all before them, entered the castle of Plessy together with its devoted lord and

his followers. Resistance was now vain, for the numbers of the assailants exceeded so terribly those of the defenders of the castle, that the lack of arms and discipline was far more than compensated. One or two of the men of Plessy, struck with panic, threw down their weapons, and declared they would surrender, forgetting that the enemy had none of the conventional feelings and principles of action which are to be found among regular soldiery. They had now, however, a terrible lesson to learn; that those who know no mercy will be shown to them if defeated, show no mercy themselves when successful. The offer to surrender, the cries for quarter, were met by knives in the throats or in the hearts of the defeated garrison. Those who were not killed by the first blow were trodden to death under the feet of the multitude, which, rushing vehemently forward one man behind another, drove all before them, or trampled down without mercy those that fell. On, on they poured through the courts and narrow passages of the castle, slaying without remorse all the men they found; and still in the front of the brutal crowd was the tall and powerful form of William Caillet, casting himself upon any who yet dared to resist, and accomplishing in a moment, by skill of arms, what his rude followers sometimes failed to do by force. On, on they poured, deluging the pavement with blood, strewing the courtyards with corpses, and shouting with savage delight at every head that fell, till at length the lower part of the castle was entirely cleared, and up the narrow staircase in the keep they rushed, led on by Caillet and some of the most fierce and determined of his comrades.

Here, however, the last desperate opposition was prepared for them. The Lord of Plessy himself, and his few surviving followers, stood side by side at the top of the first flight of steps, determined to keep that narrow passage so long as an arm could wave or a heart could beat. They ranged themselves in double row, the first rank armed with swords and battle-axes, and the men behind passing their shortened lances between their companions in front. It was an awful moment, but each heart was armed with something more than courage. The women and the children were above; and they who had hitherto fought with resolute valour for their own lives, now struck for what was dearer still, for the best, bright, dear gifts of human existence.

"There is hope," said the Lord of Plessy, as he took his station, "there is still hope while one man guards this staircase! The news of the attack will soon be known; people will come to our rescue from St. Leu and Clermont, and we shall save the women and children: let some one above hang out a black flag from the top of the tower. Hark! the wretches are rushing up."

As he spoke, a tall, athletic man, who had been the blacksmith at St. Leu, rushed past Caillet to be first in the work of butchery; but, while he was still ascending, the old noble took a step forward, raised his battle-axe in the air, and struck the broad, swarthy brow of the insurgent with the clear, sharp edge of the weapon, felling him to the ground like an ox under the blow of the butcher. His brains strewed the stone steps as Caillet and Jacques Morne ascended; and the dauntless aspect of the old lord and his companions made even the bold leader of the insurgents pause for a moment, to think how he might best attack them.

The means that suggested themselves were like the man who hesitated not to seize them. "Cover my head, Jacques Morne," he cried, and, bending down, he raised the yet warm and quivering form of the dead man in his strong arms.

The Lord of Plessy viewed him with a scornful smile, thinking that he was going to bear the corpse away; but, heaving it up with his full strength, Caillet cast it at once upon the spears and axes of the men above, and then rushed forward, sword in hand, into the midst, before they could strike him from above. The rest of the insurgents sprang after him, shouting their triumph, and in three minutes the white hair of the old baron lay dabbled with gore among the corpses of his last gallant followers.

The insurgents paused not in their work: there was a door on the other side of the landing towards which they ran at once. They found it fastened strongly on the inside; but it was instantly dashed open, and a large chamber or upper hall presented itself, at the farther side of which stood some seven or eight females, with their eyes fixed in an agony of terror upon the opening door. In the middle was a young lady of noble mien, with her hands clasped, and three children clinging round her knees. The moment she saw the faces of the insur-

gents she uttered a shrill cry, and looked behind her as if for some means of escape. There was none; and the next impulse brought her to the feet of Caillet, exclaiming, "Have pity! have pity! you have killed my father, my husband has long been dead, slay me too, if you will; but oh! spare my children!"

Caillet paused, and put his hand to his head, while those who followed him rushed on towards the shrieking group at the other side of the room. He seemed to hesitate for a moment; but the instant after, muttering to himself, "They must be bound by deeds that can never be forgiven," he spurned the lady from him, exclaiming, "I slay you not, but I will not save you!" and turned towards the door, leaving his infuriated followers mad with blood and lust to work their horrid will upon the defenceless beings who were now all that remained alive of the former numerous inhabitants of the castle.

Shriek after shriek rang from the hall as Caillet forced his way out through the multitude who were thronging into it; and as soon as he was in the open air he paused and listened till the cries of agony and horror ceased; and then, while a loud, hoarse laugh from some human demon succeeded, he muttered, "There is no retreat for them now! They are mine forever!"

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## CHAPTER VI.

A victory achieved: what a grand thing it is, a victory achieved! In any course of action, moral or physical, whether it be in the strife of contending thousands, in the daily battle-field of our rivalry with other men, in the fierce and bitter struggle with our own passions, or in our warfare against the stern opposition of circumstances, a victory gained is always a grand thing that bears up the heart, like a triumphant general upon the shields of his conquering soldiery. But even in the ordinary conflicts of hostile armies, cases will occur when the successful commander—while shouts of success ring around, and glory prepares her laurel for his brow—lies writhing in the agony of wounds and shattered limbs, with the frowning image of death before his eyes, ready to snatch the wreath from off his head.

Thus stood William Caillet in the court of the castle of Plessy: the victory was won, and it was a double victory, for it was not only that he had triumphed over the foes that opposed him, but likewise over the supporters who followed him. He had trampled the one under his feet, he had bound the others to his cause with chains that they could not break; but still out of the strife he had come wounded and shattered, not in limbs and in body, but in spirit and in heart. The dark end of all, the sure damnation of the future, was for a moment before his eyes; and the consciousness of having accomplished the first great triumphant step in the career that he had longed for, scarcely made up for the fiery agony of the means by which it was worked out. Each blow that he had struck, each step that he had taken, seemed to have crushed some of those better feelings that linger like reluctant angels to the very last, long after all hope of repentance and reformation seem extinguished, and the pang of their parting came upon him along with the exultation of victory.

He stood for more than a minute, then, in deep thought at the foot of the staircase; and a minute in the midst of such scenes is equal to years at any other period. He was interrupted at last, however, by one of those who were hurrying about through the courts, in the chambers, and among the corridors of the castle, inquiring, with an unsated appetite for blood, if there were any more to slay.

"Where go you, Caillet?" demanded the man, as his leader took a step forward on seeing him approach.

"I go to set free old Thibalt la Rue," replied Caillet.

"He is in the little tower at the end of the court," said the peasant; "I saw his thin white face peeping through the bars."

Caillet strode down and crossed the courtyard, gazing with a smile of scornful satisfaction upon the dead bodies of some of the soldiers as he passed, and muttering to himself, "These mighty lords! these mighty lords!" A few moments brought him to the tower the man had spoken of, and, looking up, he still saw the countenance of old Thibalt gazing through the grating. Two heavy bolts upon the door were soon drawn; but there still remained a lock, and Caillet was searching for some means of dashing it off, when the voice of old Thibalt exclaimed from above, "There is an axe in that man's

hand in the middle of the court." Without reply, Caillet turned thither, and with some difficulty wrenched the battle-axe from the stern grasp in which the dead man held it. A single blow then dashed the lock to atoms; and as Caillet threw open the door, the form of old Thibalt was seen descending the stairs. The old villain said nothing, but grasped his liberator's hand, and then taking a step or two forward, gazed into the faces of two or three of the dead men with a quiet, inquisitive grin, in which contempt and triumph were strangely blended.

"A good beginning, Caillet," he said; "a good beginning: they have fleshed themselves well. What are they about now, and where are they? Let there be no sparing. Blood, blood's the thing."

"No fear of that, no fear of that," answered Caillet: "they have had blood enough; too much, indeed!"

"That can't be, that can't be," cried the old man: "they must drink to the very dregs, Caillet, if you would have anything like success. First, because blood is like wine to a drunken man, the more he takes the more he must have; next, because this blood can never be forgiven, so that each man that joins us must have his baptism in gore; next, because as long as there is one drop of this noble blood left in France, there will be war between it and ours. Let them drink deep, Caillet, let them drink deep! Break down the bridge behind your people, and they must go forward. Where are they now?"

"Murdering the women and children," replied Caillet, "up in the keep there."

"That is right, that is right," cried Thibalt, rubbing his hands with a low laugh; "kill the mother serpent, and crush the eggs. Now let you and I go and seek for the gold."

"Not you and I only," said Caillet, sternly. "We must call others to help and to witness. I come to free the people of France, not to seek for wealth for myself."

The old man looked disappointed; and he replied with a sneering turn of the lip, "Do you think, Caillet, that these people will so deal with you likewise? Will not they get all the gold that they can, and let you know nothing about it?"

"The first that does so shall die," rejoined Caillet;

"and I will take means to ensure that it is not done undiscovered."

"You are wrong, you are wrong," said Thibalt, setting his teeth bitterly. "Wealth is always power, Caillet; every other sort is uncertain. You can always buy men even when you cannot command them. Bethink thee, Caillet; the time may come when some one rises up to oppose thee, some one as full of knowledge and strength as thou art. If thou hast secured to thyself wealth in the mean while, thou hast still the advantage, and wilt triumph over him. But if thou hast not, he will triumph over thee, for novelty will be in his favour. Come, let you and I go and seek for gold; else it will be too late."

But Caillet kept his purpose firmly, replying with a sharp sneer, "I seek it not, Thibalt, and I will take care that you seek it not either; for, if you do, none will share it with you, and none will find any where you have passed."

Thibalt would fain have resisted; but he found, not without bitterness and disappointment, that the bold man with whom he was leagued had assumed that command which his powers of mind naturally bestowed upon him, and that Caillet was determined both to lead and to be obeyed. Perceiving that opposition for the time was in vain, the ancient knave followed his companion in search of some of the other insurgents. He, indeed, speculated upon thwarting him at some future period, and seizing upon a greater share of authority than Caillet seemed willing to assign him. But when they had joined a party of some twenty or thirty of the rebels, who by this time had gathered together in the court, and he saw the enthusiasm with which the people regarded their leader, the power with which he swayed their passions, and the prompt obedience which every one was prepared to show, Thibalt perceived that he must not hope to be more than second, and made up his mind to secure to himself that station.

One by one the insurgents poured forth from various parts of the castle; and, just as the evening was falling, they assembled in the great court, round the pile of every sort of plunder which had been taken in the castle of Plessy. To bloodthirsty vengeance now succeeded another appetite: rapine glared in the eager eyes and fierce countenances of the men around, as they

gazed upon piles of wealth, such as, in the wildest dreams of imagination, they never expected to call their own. For his part, Caillet left them to assign what share they would to their leader; and in the joy and triumph of the moment they were liberal, declaring that, of all booty taken from the nobles, one eighth part should be allotted to him, who had led them on to their first success.

"I receive it," said Caillet, "not for my own sake, but for yours; for we shall need money to meet many expenses that you dream not of. One half of what you give me I set apart for the common use of the great cause, the other I divide between myself and good old Thibalt la Rue, who has sacrificed everything for us, so that his portion, whatever it be in the general distribution, shall be equal to my own."

All that Caillet said was, for the time being, law to those that surrounded him; for, in fact, he had at that moment everything in his favour to give him authority over the peasantry of France: high education, natural genius, skill in arms and in all sort of exercises, great eloquence, keen foresight, dauntless courage, corporeal vigour, beauty, grace, inexhaustible activity, unshakable hardness of constitution. He felt all these advantages, too, and the very consciousness of his power served but to augment it. There was one feeling, indeed, in his bosom, which might have diminished his influence if divulged. It was not the wild, rash, passionate love which he felt towards Adela de Mauvinet; for that he knew might lead him on to efforts almost superhuman. It was not the burning thirst for revenge against those who hitherto had thwarted him; for that would carry him forward even more fiercely in the path which it was necessary for him to pursue. It was, that something like remorse was still present in his heart; that the natural effect of the education he had received was to make him look upon deeds of mere butchery with some degree of horror.

About two hours after the partition of the booty had been made, Caillet and Thibalt sat above, in one of the higher rooms of the keep, upon pretence of taking counsel in regard to what was next to be done, while their comrades revelled below; but in reality for the purpose of escaping for the time from a scene of brutal excess. Caillet had already taken steps for the defence of him-

self and his companions, should they be attacked during the night; and his measures displayed a deep insight into the characters of all around. He had chosen out some twenty men, whose nature, though fierce and resolute, was abhorrent to mere animal indulgence, and had appointed them to guard the castle while the rest wallowed in wine and gluttony. Each of those he chose had his passion, as Caillet well knew. With one it was blood, with another it was gold, with another it was authority; but with none of them was it the love of dainty food or intoxicating drink. Still some inducement was necessary to make them relish the solitary watch of the castle wall while their companions were making merry within; and Caillet, as he had no power to order, had picked them out from the rest, and had led them to the task he assigned them by the very means to which their several characters rendered them most susceptible. To one he had given money from his own store; to another he had held out the prospect of command; to a third he had spoken of the proposed massacre of the following day; and he had met with no opposition from any, but all obeyed with a promptitude which paved the way for that sort of discipline, if it may be so called, which he intended soon to introduce.

The two chief insurgents then conferred together in the chamber which had once been the lady's bower in the castle of Plessy. The dead bodies had been removed, and the gold and trinkets which had been found there had long before been carried away, as we have said, and distributed among the plunderers. Many another decoration, however, remained; and as Caillet sat by the table with his head leaning moodily upon his hand, he rolled his eyes over the hangings of silk and fine linen that covered the walls like the curtains of a tent, and thought of the soft and happy hours which might there have passed, the scenes of domestic love and joy that were now at an end forever. The dreams of his own youthful years, the hopes and aspirations of the purer part of his being, came like the long, sad train of early friends departed which will sometimes throng upon our slumber.

But as in sleep, also, such visions of the past were mingled with the sterner realities of the present. The image of the lady of that bower herself rose up before the wand of the enchanter, Imagination: he saw her in

her calm beauty as she might have moved through those halls that morning; he saw her with her clasped hands in that terrible hour when he first burst upon her sight; he saw her at his knees praying for that mercy which he had refused to grant; and at the same time, from the hall beneath, rose up in loud revelry the voices of the very men who had polluted and destroyed her.

For a moment Caillet became sick at heart, and again he pressed his hand upon that brow where the fiend crime had stamped, in characters of fire, the sentence of eternal condemnation. His hell had begun upon earth, but he felt that he must be the demon altogether. The burden of remorse, the weight of irrevocable sins, the impossibility of retreat, the wild, burning thirst for more which always follows wickedness, urged him to cast away every human feeling; and, after clinching his hands hard, and setting his teeth as if to smother in his own bosom the last sighs of humanity, he rose slowly from the table, took up the lamp that stood before him, and deliberately applied the light in several places to the hangings of the room.

Old Thibalt laughed aloud. In an instant all was in a blaze; and in less than half an hour, from the watch-towers of the country round was seen a tall flame, like a cathedral spire of fire, rising up from the devoted castle of Plessy.

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## CHAPTER VII.

It was the same sweet, calm evening in the early year which, as we have related in the last chapter, was blackened by the first outbreak of the most bloody and ferocious insurrection that was ever recorded by the page of history, when a large body of horsemen, in number perhaps fifty, accompanied by twelve or fourteen women, arrived at a little village in the Beauvoisis not above twelve miles from the fated castle of Plessy.

We may call it fated; for, had that troop of veteran soldiers but united with the force in Beauvais and St. Leu, and turned its arms against the insurgents, the Jacquerie would have been nipped in the bud, and would

never have brought forth the baleful fruit it did; but, alas! the leader of that body and those who were with him were utterly unaware of the events that were taking place so near. They had made inquiries during the morning, and had found that all the parties of adventurers which had lately scourged that part of the country had been called away, by the prospect of greater gain, into the neighbourhood of Paris, and that the whole of the Beauvoisis was now free from foreign plunderers. Thus with a feeling of perfect security they journeyed on gayly and happily; and on arriving at the little village which I have mentioned, paused to get some refreshment from the country people. Hostelry, indeed, there was none, but the gentleman at the head of the band seemed well known to the peasantry; and everything that could be found was speedily brought forth to set before the Lord of Mauvinet and his fair daughter Adela, as they sat upon the little green that ran between two rows of houses, one on either side.

"Thanks, my good woman, thanks," said the Lord of Mauvinet, as he rose from the grass: "your milk is better than in our more southern lands of Touraine; and I hope and trust you have not suffered so severely here as our good people on the banks of the once merry Loire."

"We have been somewhat better off than our neighbours, noble sir," replied the woman who served them, taking, with lowly reverence, some pieces of money that the Lord of Mauvinet gave her: "you see the forest shelters us here, beau sire; but the folks out in the open country have been driven almost to despair. I know hundreds of them who have fed all the winter upon acorns."

"Poor souls!" cried the Lord of Mauvinet, "we must do somewhat to help them, and that right speedily. It is sad to hear of such misery; and the more patiently our peasantry bear it, the more terrible it is to witness."

"Ay, sir, they do bear it patiently," said the woman, "but there are some bad spirits among them too. That same William Caillet has been roaming about for the last three months, and—"

"If I catch him," interrupted the Lord of Mauvinet, "he shall curse the day that he was born. Does he show himself openly, then? The Lord of St. Leu wrote me that he would cause him to be seized long ago."

"Ah! noble sir, but the good lord has not the power," replied the woman; and, looking fearfully around, she added, in a low tone, "why, I have just now heard that this very morning the bailiff of the Lord of St. Leu found him at Chapelle en Mont and tried to seize him, but that Caillet killed the bailiff and an archer that was with him too."

"I will to St. Leu this night!" exclaimed the Lord of Mauvinet. "Adela, you shall go on with the rest, and I, with Huguenin and five of the men-at-arms, will turn aside at the top of the hill, that I may confer with my noble friend, and ensure that this monster roams the country no more."

Adela, however, pleaded hard to accompany him. She would fain, she said, see her fair friend Margaret of St. Leu; and she loved not to ride at the head of a troop of men-at-arms without her father or her brother as a companion.

"We must not burden the good lord," answered the count, "with too many unexpected guests."

But Adela still entreated; and at length it was so arranged that she, with five of the men-at-arms, should go with her father, sending on her women and the rest of the troop to the place where they had originally proposed to stop.

"There is no time for delay, then," said the Lord of Mauvinet, "for we are far from St. Leu, and it will be dark long ere we reach it. Let your travelling-gear, Adela, be charged behind one of the men-at-arms. We must quicken the speed of our horses, for we have lost much time by the way."

No long preparations were requisite, and the troop was soon once more in motion. The road they took wound through the forest and up one of the numerous hills which diversified the woodland, passing not very far from the spot where stood the hut which Caillet had tenanted for many weeks. The whole country was perfectly well known to the Lord of Mauvinet; and, halting where the road to St. Leu branched off from that which led to Beaumont, he sent forward the greater part of the troop, while he, with Adela and the four or five men that he had chosen to accompany him, pursued the same path which the Captal de Buch had taken a month or two before. But, instead of embarrassing himself in the intricacies of the forest, he followed a direct course

towards St. Leu, skirting along the woods as they fringed the top of the hill. A wide scene was thence exposed to his eye; for, although the patches of brushwood sometimes crossed the road and ran a considerable way down the slope, the declivity was in general so considerable as to enable a mounted cavalier to see over the whole country towards Beauvais and La Houssaye.

As they proceeded, however, the sun, which had been casting long shadows over the scene during the whole of the latter part of their ride, sank beneath the horizon altogether, and, after a brief moment or two of twilight, night fell, and the stars came brightly out in the heaven above. Still the Lord of Mauvinet rode on without any apprehension, conversing with his daughter on the beauty of the night, and calculating when the moon would rise.

"I think she is coming up now, my father," said Adela, after they had gone on for about half an hour in darkness: "what a red light she gives at this time of the year, when low in the sky!"

The count looked out towards the part of the horizon to which she pointed, and for a moment or two made no reply, watching a faint rosy streak that hung upon some low clouds on the edge of the sky.

"That cannot be the moon, Adela," he answered at length; "that is to the westward. It must be the light of some fire that the poor peasantry have kindled to warm themselves by. It is probably nearer to us than it seems. But it is increasing very rapidly. How the dull, red glare flickers against the heavens! and see, there is smoke curling up in the midst of the blaze, like some dark demon in his fiery element. Where can that be, Huguenin?" he continued, drawing in his rein. "It must surely be at Plessy."

"It is farther than Plessy, I should think, my lord," replied the gentleman to whom he addressed himself.

But almost as he spoke the blaze appeared wellnigh extinguished for a moment, and then rose up in a pyramid of light, rendering every object round almost as bright as day. The Lord of Mauvinet spurred on his horse to a spot a few yards in advance, for the purpose of obtaining a better sight; and thence the towers of Plessy were plainly to be distinguished, with the fire pouring through the windows of the keep, and the spire of flame topping the dungeon tower.

"By Heaven!" exclaimed the count, "it is the castle itself. On my knighthood, I must ride down to see if I can aid them. What can I do with thee, my Adela? Take Huguenin and go on to St. Leu."

"Nay," said Adela, "there are some cottages not far on. Do you not remember the beautiful child that was bitten by the viper just as we were passing one day, and that I cured it with the oil my uncle brought from Palestine?"

"Yes, I remember well," replied the count, quickly; "but what of that, Adela? wilt thou stay there? The people are most likely gone to sleep by this time."

"Let us try," said Adela. "It is straight between Plessy and St. Leu, and you can take me with you as you return: you cannot be long, my father, for that castle is wellnigh down, I fear."

"I fear so too," answered the count; "but let us make haste, dear child. Once I have bestowed thee safely, I shall soon be down and back again."

They accordingly rode on, and approached a wild-looking hut, which has been already described in this book. It was that of Jacques Morne. As they drew up their horses, a momentary apprehension, a sort of presentiment of evil, seemed to cross the mind of the count. "Keep Huguenin with thee, my child," he said: "ever since that villain Caillet's conduct, I fear for thee, Adela."

"Oh, there is no danger, my father," replied the lady: "these good people would give their life for me. Never shall I forget how the woman watched me as I poured the oil into the viper's bite, and how she blessed me when the child looked up and smiled again."

While they had been speaking, one of the men-at-arms had dismounted, and knocked with his gauntlet at the door. A female voice almost immediately demanded, "Who is there? Is it thou, Jacques?"

"It is I, good mother," replied Adela, riding up to the door: "I want to rest with you a while."

The woman undid the bolt and came forth, gazing wildly under her bent brows at the lady and the armed men. She gave Adela no welcome; but her looks and her apparel spoke so much misery, that the fair girl believed want to be the cause of her coldness; and dismounting from her horse, without fear or hesitation, she said, "Do you not remember me, good mother? How is your sweet boy that was bitten by the viper?"

"He has been worse bitten by the viper hunger," replied the woman: "we have been starving, lady."

"Well, you shall starve no longer," rejoined Adela, while one of the men took her horse and fastened it to a tree.

"I know that," answered the woman, wildly; "those days have passed."

"Well, good woman, I will wait here a while," continued Adela, "till the count comes back. Ride on, my dear father; I shall be quite safe here."

"You had better stay and watch without, Huguenin," said the count.

But the wife of Jacques Morne now exclaimed eagerly, though with the same wild look, "She is safe, noble sir, she is quite safe; no one shall harm her here, if I were to die for it. Do you think that any one should hurt, in my cottage, the lady that saved my child?"

"Nay, I doubt you not," replied the count, turning away without giving any farther orders; and Huguenin, who, to say the truth, was eager to see what was going on below, rode after his lord, leaving Adela in the hut.

The Lord of Mauvinet put his horse into a quick pace, and galloped rapidly over the two miles that lay between the hut of the swineherd and the serfs' village of Plessy en Val. The fire still raged; and, though now and then the trees cut off the view of the castle, and threw a dark shadow over the road, the light was still so strong, either direct from the burning building or reflected from the sky, that every object was quite distinct at some distance. At the entrance of the place, the Lord of Mauvinet drew up his horse in surprise and horror at the sight of one of the peasants lying dead at his own door, and springing to the ground, he looked into the hut. It was partly burned, but the fire seemed to have gone out of itself after merely consuming the rafters. On the floor lay a woman and three children weltering in their blood, and the count drew back troubled and bewildered.

"What can be the meaning of this?" he said. "Some band of adventurers must have sacked the place and taken the castle. This is no accidental fire, Huguenin."

"I fear that it is not, beau sire," replied Huguenin; "but look, there's a head peeping at us from behind that second cottage. It is a woman: she takes us for some of the companions."

"Come hither, my poor girl," said the count, speaking aloud; "we will not hurt, but rather defend thee."

His voice caught the woman's ear; and, after twice looking cautiously out from behind the building, she ventured to come forth altogether; at first approaching slowly, but then running on and clasping the count's knees.

"Fly, my lord! fly!" she cried; "fly, or they will murder you too!"

"Who?" demanded the Lord of Mauvinet, raising the young woman from the ground. "Who has done all that bloody work?"

"Fly, fly!" reiterated the poor creature, wildly: "get into the forest and hide you among the trees: I have left my baby among the bushes, and come to see if my husband be living or dead."

"But who?" demanded the count again, "who are they that have outdone all the wickedness of others, and have butchered the poor peasantry in their huts?"

"It is William Caillet and his people," answered the woman: "there are thousands and tens of thousands. They have taken Plessy, and murdered my good lord, and now they have set fire to the castle, and will soon be coming back again. So fly, if you would save your lives."

The Lord of Mauvinet pressed his hand upon his brow, cursing the day that he had ever raised the villain who had so ill requited all his kindness, from the low state in which he had first found him. "Thousands, and tens of thousands!" he cried. "Taken the castle of Plessy, a strongly-defended fortress! But my child, Huguenin! my child! We must indeed fly, and take her from this place, and that right quickly."

As he spoke, he remounted his horse, and was turning his bridle to go back by the road he came, but the woman caught the rein, exclaiming, "Not that way, not that way! Look, look! They are going over the hill;" and directing his eyes towards the fields, the Lord of Mauvinet perceived, at the distance of half a mile, a large troop of men, some four or five hundred in number, already between him and the cottage of the swineherd Morne. They were holding no array, though keeping close together; but, from the bright reflection of the fire, from various weapons of steel that they carried on their shoulders, it was evident that they were well arm-

ed. At the same time a sound of loud shouting and singing came from the road to Plessy, and the woman exclaimed, "Hark, hark! they are upon that road too. They will kill us if they find us here."

"I must up the hill at all risks," cried the Lord of Mauvinet. "Let go my rein, girl! My daughter is at the swineherd's hut above."

"What, Morne!" she asked, "Jacques Morne! why he is one of the chief butchers! Your daughter is dead by this time; for they have vowed not to leave one drop of noble blood unspilled throughout the land. If you will go, come hither with me. I will guide you to the back of the hut by a shorter way."

"Take her up behind thee, François," cried the count, "and ride on as she directs."

"Speed! speed!" cried the woman, as soon as the man had raised her on his horse. "They are coming quick; I hear them, and they will kill us all as they did Martin the wheelright. Through between those cottages there—among the willows by the stream. Now up," she continued, as they rode along, "across that break in the wood, and then the narrow road to the left. It is steep and slippery."

Onward, however, they galloped without a moment's pause, till they had reached the top of the hill.

"Now which way?" demanded the Lord of Mauvinet.

"Hush! speak low," said the woman, "for you are near. Let me down: my babe lies under those trees. Follow the path straight on; it will lead you to the styes behind the hut. Perchance you may get there before them, and save your daughter; but if you find them there, you may die with her, but not deliver her."

The count spurred forward quickly, though more cautiously, the trees for some way shutting out all view beyond. A moment or two after, however, the light of the still burning fire came through the branches, and the next instant he could distinguish the mass of low buildings in which were kept the swine. But, alas! there came upon his ear the sound of loud voices talking and laughing; and as he looked between the trees he saw the multitude, some sitting, some standing at a halt before the cottage where he had left his child.

## CHAPTER VIII.

MANY are the lessons that the guileless heart of youth requires ere it learns the hard and terrible task of suspicion; and though, assuredly, Adela had seen enough of baseness and ingratitude, in one who had been loaded with benefits, to make her doubt that any tie can bind the corrupt spirit of man, yet she entered the cottage of the swineherd without the slightest fear, and approached a large fire near which was placed the bed of the peasant's children. They were buried in profound sleep, on their lowly couch of dried rushes and withered leaves; and Adela stooped down, with a feeling of natural satisfaction, to look at the little being she had saved from almost certain death.

When she raised her head again, two things struck her with some surprise, and created the first apprehension that had entered her mind. The woman was still standing at the door, gazing upon her with an expression difficult to describe. It could be scarcely called fierce, and yet there was a wild, glaring savageness in her eyes that startled and alarmed her young guest. There was a sort of hesitation, a doubt, even perhaps a shade of fear in it, that naturally excited terror; but at the same time there was a second object even more calculated to create suspicion than the face of the woman herself. On a rough wooden block in the midst of the room, which served for the purpose of a table, appeared a multitude of things that entirely contradicted the tale of starvation which she had told. There were rich meats, and leathern bottles apparently filled with wine. There was a large golden drinking cup, too, and another smaller one of silver, with a number of spoons of precious metal, a rich hunting horn, and a bracelet from a lady's arm. Where could all these come from? The question flashed through Adela's mind in a moment, and a fit of involuntary trembling seized her at the thought.

"You shake, lady," said the woman, approaching her; "it cannot be with cold."

"I know not why," replied Adela, hesitating; "but my father, he will soon be back again, and—"

"Perhaps he may never come back again," rejoined the woman, sternly. "How many men has he with him?"

"Only five," replied Adela.

"And none behind?" asked the swineherd's wife.

"The rest have gone on towards Beaumont," answered Adela. "Oh God! why did I not go with him?"

"To die?" demanded the woman.

"Ay, if need be," said the lady, more firmly; "but why should he die? Tell me more! The adventurers have not left the country, then; this is their plunder, and they leave it with you, unhappy woman! Have you promised me protection but to destroy me?"

"No," answered the swineherd's wife, coming close to her, and speaking in a solemn tone, "no, lady, I have not. You have been looking at that child," she continued: "you saved his life, and by that child I swear that I will save yours, or they shall take mine."

"But my father," cried Adela, dropping her riding glove and clasping her hands; "oh, save him too, then!"

"That I cannot do," she replied: "I am sorry that I let him go on, because I have heard that he is a good man; but if he reach Plessy he dies."

"Then let me ride after him, and tell him not," exclaimed Adela, darting towards the door. But the woman stopped her, saying, "It is all in vain; they are half way there by this time; but perhaps they may meet a warning by the way. They must pass through the village; and if they use their senses, they will find enough to make them draw the bridle there."

Adela covered her eyes with her hands and wept, and the woman stood gazing at her for a minute or two in silence; but at length she added, "Thou art a pretty creature and a good, and perhaps it were as well for thee to die now as hereafter; but yet I will save thee, even if these men come back."

"They may pass by without dismounting," cried Adela; "and surely, even if they take my father and myself, they will put us to ransom as they did before. But shut the door, good mother; close it well; deaden the fire, and let them think we all sleep: they may pass by without dismounting."

The woman shook her head. "You mistake, you mistake," she said. "These are not people who either give or take ransoms. It is the peasantry of France,

lady, who have risen to slay their oppressors, and to drown out in the blood of our tyrants the very memory of the chains we have broken. The work has begun already; Plessy is taken; its lord and all his minions are dead; and the gold, and the wealth, and the rich food, and the fine wine, which they had hoarded up while we were starving in misery and wretchedness, is now divided among those who had a better right to it than the men who kept it: that is the share of my husband and one or two others, to whom it fell by lot."

Adela kept her hand pressed tight over her eyes. She durst not say what she felt; for there was a fierceness in the woman's manner which made her fear that any unguarded word might be made a pretext to betray her to the destroyers, and she only murmured, therefore, "Then your husband is one of them?"

"Ay is he, lady," answered the woman: "he is at length a man—a human being. He is no longer the beast of the field for any lord! But hark! was not that a sound!"

"Oh save, save me!" cried Adela, her natural repugnance to death overcoming every other feeling for the moment.

"Fear not, fear not," replied Jacques Morne's wife: "I will save thee!" and, lowering her tone a little, she added, with a softened manner, "Did you not save my boy? But you must do exactly what I tell you," she continued. "It may be difficult; my husband is a changed man; and when he came back an hour ago, to leave those things here, he was over the knees in blood. Mercy and fear have no place in his heart now; and I must conceal you from him if he should come, though I do not believe he will, for they are going on with all speed to burn the castle of St. Leu or some other place, and they will not be satisfied so long as there is a stronghold left in the Beauvoisis. First, I must lead away your horse; for if they see him, they will suspect the truth; and then I will soon find some place where you may be hidden."

"Where, where?" cried Adela.

"Wait till I come back and I will show you," answered the woman; and she turned and left the cottage for a moment or two.

Adela looked wildly round her; there seemed no place where even a child could conceal itself, and in despair

she thought of going out into the forest and seeking some obscure spot among the trees ; but, ere she could reach the door, the swineherd's wife returned, and, leading her back, said, " Be not afraid ; you shall be here in safety. I hear them coming over the fields and through the woods," she continued, " singing and rejoicing in the great deeds that they have done. We shall have bread now : no more lack of food ; no more want and starvation : furred gowns for the children, and milk, and wine, and bread."

While thus she went on, the predominant idea taking up her whole attention, and making her forget the terrors of her guest, Adela stood before her ready to drop, clasping her hands in the wildness of fear, and murmuring incoherent prayers and entreaties, mingled with low words expressive of her apprehensions for her father, which not even the dread of immediate death could banish.

At length the woman noticed her again, exclaiming, " Fear not, poor trembler, fear not, but come hither with me ;" and, walking slowly and deliberately to the other side of the room, she opened a rude door, which Adela had imagined afforded another outlet into the forest. As soon as it was thrown open, however, she perceived that it led merely to a low narrow receptacle for fuel, in which were piled up, nearly to the top, a number of fagots, composed of dry branches gathered in the wood during the winter season.

" There is room for thee behind," cried the woman, eagerly, as if startled by some sound ; " get thee in, round there : lie still, and stir not, whatever thou hearest. Hark ! they are coming !"

" Oh, ask for my father," cried Adela, as with difficulty she made her way into the recess round the pile of fagots.

" Hush !" said the swineherd's wife ; " crouch down behind there. I will leave the door open that they may suspect nothing ; stay, I will put a fresh fagot on the fire : then they will seek none themselves ;" and, thus saying, she took up one of the bundles of wood and cast it upon the hearth.

In the mean while Adela, shaking in every limb with terror, lay down behind the pile, listening, with her sense of hearing quickened by fear, to the steps and tones of the men who were approaching. The sounds grew louder every moment as the insurgents came nearer,

some singing with drunken ribaldry, some shouting, some laughing, while the hurried and irregular tread of their feet seemed to the poor girl like the rush of a flood of waters destined to overwhelm her.

In a minute, some one stopped at the door of the hut and shook it violently, while the voice of Jacques Morne exclaimed, "Open, wife, open; it is I. Why, in the fiend's name," he continued, as he entered, "do you bolt the door? Are we not lords and masters now? Come in, Caillet; come in, old Thibalt."

"Lords and masters wot ye?" said the woman. "Not quite that yet, Jacques. You have much to do before you will be that. Know you there have been men-at-arms here since you went?"

"Why did you not kill them, then?" demanded Jacques Morne. "It is no more killing a man-at-arms than a weazel."

"Thou art drunk," said his wife. "Did you not meet them, Caillet?"

"No," answered Caillet: "which way did they take? and how many were there?"

"Some nine or ten," replied the woman; "and as for the way they took, I cannot tell. It seemed as if they went towards Plessy."

"Did you let them know what had happened?" demanded Caillet.

"No, no," exclaimed the swineherd's wife; "I took care not to do that. I thought that they might, perhaps, fall in with you, and get the fate of the others."

"If they have gone down to Plessy," said Caillet, "they will find plenty ready to deal with them. Know you who they were? If there be any great man among them, it may be as well to go back again to do him honour."

Adela's heart sunk, while the woman paused a moment ere she replied, and, small as was the chance of her father's escape, it was a relief to her to hear the words, "I marked not their faces, but they seemed common men-at-arms."

A voice then shouted from without, "Hallo! where do we go to? where do we go to? Don't keep us here waiting. Some say to St. Leu, others say Argot."

"I come, I come!" cried Caillet. "Take the way to Argot," he continued, speaking from the door: "the serfs of the village there will join us, and we can sleep in the

huts round about the castle; so that to-morrow by day-break we have them in a net. To Argot! to Argot! Go on, I will follow you. Give me a cup of wine, Jacques Morne," he added; "I have a burning thirst upon me."

"Thou hast drunk blood enough, Caillet," answered Morne, in a drunken tone; "but it quenches no drought, I know; and the more one tastes, the more one longs for. I should like to kill a dozen more to-night."

As he spoke, he moved towards the table where the bottle stood, while Caillet remained with his eyes bent firmly upon the blazing fagots, as if he found a great interest in watching the progress of the devouring element. Adela continued, as before, behind the pile of brushwood, holding her breath as Jacques Morne came nearer to her, lest even the slightest sound should call his attention. What were her feelings, however, when he suddenly stopped as he was advancing towards the table, and stooped down, exclaiming, "Here is a woman's glove! Who brought it here?"

"Yourself, you fool," replied his wife, readily. "You are so drunk you do not know what you are doing. You brought it with the other things, and one of the children had it to play with."

"It is a lie!" said Jacques Morne. "I brought no glove."

"Hush, hush!" cried Caillet: "give me the wine, Jacques Morne, and squabble not for foolery. Wilt thou come with us, or wilt thou not?"

"I will stay here and sleep," replied the swineherd, "and come to you in the morning!"

"That thou shalt not!" exclaimed his wife: "I will have none of thee here till thou hast done more of the good work; or else I will give thee a petticoat and make thee mind the children, while I take an axe on my shoulder, and follow the deliverers of the land. It is such men as thou art that spoil all things by fancying them done when they are scarce begun."

"Thou art right, thou art right!" cried Caillet: "though we have seized one castle, destroyed the nest of one vulture, yet there is many another foul brood to be exterminated before we can be at all secure. Those who stop short in such matters as those are almost as bad as enemies, for they cool the hearts of others. Come, come, Morne, you have been among the first, and must not halt now."

"I will not halt, I will not halt, Caillet!" cried Jacques Morne, who had filled himself a cup of wine, while he gave another to Caillet, and had thereby added to the inebriety which was already upon him. "Here, old Thibalt—drink, man, drink! I will not halt, Caillet, I will not halt, if all the fiends of hell wanted to keep me; but this glove, I want to know about this accursed glove! No, halt! I'll not halt. I'll only sit down for a minute to rest myself, and come on directly;" and, as he spoke, he proceeded with somewhat unsteady steps, as if to seek a seat upon the very pile of fagots behind which poor Adela de Mauvinet lay concealed.

Before he reached it, however, he stumbled, and fell prone upon the bed of leaves and rushes where the children lay, waking them in terror and surprise. His wife scolded vehemently, and would have pushed him out, but Caillet, turning away with a look of contempt, told her to keep him where he was. "He is in no state to go with us," he added; "let him come on to-morrow. But, my faith, we must have less drunkenness."

Thus saying, he strode to the door, and left the cottage together with old Thibalt, who had taken up the golden cup into which the swineherd had poured the wine, and forgot to put it down ere he departed.

"What is to be done now?" murmured Jacques Morne's wife to herself, looking from her husband to her children. "Hush, hush, Hue! lie down, my boy, and go to sleep again. Drunken beast, why have you wakened the children?"

"You lie," cried Morne; "I did not waken them; you woke them yourself;" and, sitting up on the end of the bed, he prepared to rise, though it was evidently with difficulty.

"Ha!" said the woman, a new thought seeming to strike her, "thou shalt have no more wine! though thou wouldst drink the whole bottle if thy pitiful stomach would hold it; but thou shalt have no more, I say;" and, as she spoke, she moved to the table, affecting to take the means of farther potations out of his reach.

"I will, I will!" cried Jacques Morne, rushing forward with the obstinacy of drunkenness; "I will drink the whole *bottieu*, I declare, as I saw the juggler do at the Cour Pleniére."

"That thou couldst not if thou wouldst, and shouldst not if thou couldst," replied his wife, affecting to strug-

gle with him for the large leathern bottle. She suffered him to take it easily enough, and, setting the mouth to his lips, he drank a long, deep draught. Then staggering back to the corner of the bed, he sat for a little while poisoning the bottle on his knee, and at length raised it once more to his head. He could not hold it up long, however, but let it drop from his hands, spilling part of the contents upon the floor; and, after swaying backward and forward for a moment or two, with his eyes half closed, he fell backward upon the bed dead asleep.

The woman easily hushed the children to sleep again, and then looked out at the door; but she suddenly drew back her head, and waited for a moment listening. Then approaching to the spot where Adela lay, she took her by the hand, and brought her forth, saying, "All is safe now, I think. Drink some of this wine to give you strength. Mount your horse again, and away, either to Beaumont or St. Leu, with all speed."

"But my father, my father?" exclaimed Adela.

"He is safe," said a voice apparently close to her, which she instantly recognised as that of the count; and, turning round, she gazed over the part of the cottage from which it seemed to proceed, but could see nothing except a small square hole made apparently to look from the hut itself towards the styes for the swine.

The swineherd's wife grasped the fair girl's arm tight, and pointed to Jacques Morne as he lay prostrate on the bed, saying, "My husband shall be safe! Is it not so? I have delivered your life, remember, and I will—"

Ere she could add more, however, the Lord of Mauvinet was in the cottage, and in another instant had clasped Adela to his heart. The woman plucked him by the sleeve, murmuring some anxious questions; but the count turned towards her with a sad and frowning brow, replying, "You have spared and shall be spared; but add not a word; the curse of God is upon such deeds as have been done this day; and, though I take not yon wretch's life, vengeance is not the less sure. Come, my child, come! I have seen all and heard all, and for your sake the sword rests in the scabbard, which, perhaps, ought to be drawn."

## CHAPTER IX.

THE glorious summer had come back again, calling back out of the earth the flowers and leaves, spreading over the sky the sunshine and the blue, and giving back to the choristers of nature cheerfulness and song, as we may suppose the dawning of another life will do to the heart which has been chilled in the wintry grave, restoring to it the bright objects of love and affection lost upon earth, giving the sunshine of faith, and the blue sky of peace, and drawing from the spirit the melodious voice of praise.

It was in the early morning, somewhere towards the hour of six, and the slanting sun, like hope in youth, brightened all the salient objects in the picture, and promised a long course of glory and of brightness. The heart of him that looked upon the glittering scene around beat in glad response to its aspect, as, keeping his horse at a quick pace during the freshness of the morning, a young cavalier, mounted upon a strong destrier or charger, trotted gayly along through the hilly country which at that time formed the frontier of France on the side of Lower Lorraine. Like every one else in those days, he rode fully armed, though the steel panoply by which he was covered was in a great measure concealed by a surcoat of arms, presenting a silver ground, traversed by a broad stripe, called a bend dexter, in deep blue, bearing on the centre of the breast, technically the fess point, a heart embroidered in red. The cavalier was stout and tall, a light mustache fringed his upper lip, and the hair, which was suffered to appear by a velvet cap replacing the helmet that hung at his saddle-bow, curled in profuse masses over his neck and shoulder. His complexion was browned by exercise and exposure, and upon his cheek and brow appeared more than one deep scar, telling of blows boldly met, and probably as vigorously returned. As he gazed round him, there was an air of glad hilarity in his face, and in all his bearing, which spoke a heart full of hope and joy. One perceived it in the light touch of his left hand upon the bridle; one marked it in the half-suspended position of the right; one saw it in the bright

sparkling of his clear hazel eye, in the thrown-back head, the expanded chest, and the smiling curl of the lip, as the varied thoughts chased each other through his busy mind.

That young cavalier was Albert Denyn, returning to his native land, after his first campaign under the glorious leading of the Captal de Buch; and, to say sooth, though there were manifold feelings in his bosom which combined to give that joyful air to his whole person, the surcoat of arms which we have said he wore was not among the least important causes of the gladness which sparkled on his countenance.

He had gone forth with no right to any other garment than that of the serf; he came back clad in the coat of arms which he had won from a grateful prince by his own merits; and the feelings which had given him energy to win that garb were now his chief recompense in wearing it.

In every faculty of the mind and body, Albert Denyn had expanded, if we may use the term, since last we saw him; and all those faculties had been directed to win high renown by an eager and enthusiastic spirit prompted to vast exertions by the strong love which we have already seen working at his heart.

I believe that the portion of earthly greatness which men acquire is regulated as much by the strength of the passions which prompt them as by the powers of their minds. The passions, in short, are the main springs which move the watches of the world, the principles are the pendulums or balances which regulate the movements, the talents are the wheels which carry on the action. But, alas! the human kind but little appreciates a correct result, and the strength of the main spring too often obtains more admiration in the world than the nice adaptation of those principles which regulate its movement. It is sad, it is very sad, to think that the meed of fame, of power, and of success, is more frequently assigned to the action of strong passions than to the operation of great intellect. The ambition that carried forward Napoleon Bonaparte raised him above La Place in the estimation of the world, because La Place was without any strong passion to direct his efforts on those roads where power and fortune are to be gained; but who can doubt, that traces calmly the course of the one and the other, where the greatest mind, the greatest soul, resided?

That man whose passions are so strong as to trample upon all restraint, to cast behind him virtue and remorse, and to use his talents solely for the gratification of his predominant desire, whatever that desire may be, has a field open before him from which the man of stronger principles is excluded; and though his success will often depend as much upon accident as upon his own efforts, yet he will acquire, either in fortune or misfortune, the renown of great enterprises, which is the most dazzling of all tinsel in the eyes of the world.

It must be acknowledged, that although Albert Denyn was possessed of great natural energies of mind and activity of body; although he was brave to a fault, quick, skilful, talented; though he had genius for everything which in that age led to greatness, nevertheless, he owed his prompt and rapid success to the eager impetuosity, the resolute and unconquerable perseverance which was given by the presence of a strong master passion in his heart. Love, with him, was as one of those generals whom we have heard of, who have still conquered by their own energy, when every one around deemed success impossible; who, when repelled at one point, still attacked at another, and whose fire gave courage and energy to every part of the army that surrounded them.

Thus, during the time that he had followed the capital in his expedition against the pagans of Prussia, and in various other accidental enterprises which presented themselves, and were never neglected by that great adventurous leader, the thought of Adela de Mauvinet, the hope of justifying her regard, of winning renown which might reach her ears, and of gratifying her heart by his own success, seemed to give him eyes for opportunities that other people overlooked, and to endow him with resolution, endurance, courage, and activity which he might never have displayed in the same degree, had not that strong motive been ever present to his thoughts.

We will not pause upon all that took place during the period of his absence. That period was but brief, it is true; but those were days in which great events and strange adventures crowded themselves into a narrow space, and jostled each other, if we may so term it, upon the highways of life. We have instances of men sharing in the great victory of Cressy, in the north of France, and aiding to conquer the Saracens in the south of Spain, within six weeks; and the Captal de Buch was not one

to let his sword slumber in the scabbard, whenever there was an occasion of drawing it with honour. As he went towards the north, he aided several of the princes of Germany in the wars which were then raging; and as he returned, he took service for twenty days with the emperor, and in that short space went through all the hazards, the adventures, and the struggles of a campaign.

Throughout the whole of these proceedings, Albert Denyn had every day some opportunities of distinguishing himself; and, indeed, it became visible to his own eyes, as well as to those of others, that such opportunities were studiously afforded him by the capital. This was the only sign of peculiar favour that the great leader bestowed upon him. At first it made the rest of the band somewhat jealous; but they found that to counterbalance, as it were, the advantage given, the capital was more sparing of reward and praise to Albert than to any other of his followers. He knew that an opening was what the youth desired, and that the honour was the best recompense for his exertions. Thus gradually the stout men-at-arms became reconciled to see Albert Denyn always chosen as one in any important undertaking; and even more, his success was so continual, his exertions so great, his talents so conspicuous, and his superiority so evident, even to themselves, that they began to acknowledge his right to lead, and to be obeyed, and often wondered among themselves why it was that the capital seemed so niggardly of praise and reward to one who so well deserved it.

Whatever might be the object of the capital in the conduct which he pursued, Albert Denyn himself was well satisfied. There were occasional little traits which showed him that he was both esteemed and loved. More than once, when there was a difficulty in procuring quarters, his leader made him sleep in the same chamber with himself. On various expeditions, he invited him to sit down to meat with him, and sent him the cup out of which he drank. At other times, too, when they were alone together, Albert would see the capital's eyes rest upon him with an expression of thoughtful interest, which was not to be mistaken; and all these signs showed him, that neither the silence which his leader maintained regarding his successes, nor the severity with which he put him upon every service of danger, difficulty, or fatigue, was any indication of want of regard and care.

He felt, moreover, that by this very conduct the capital was effecting for him the greatest of all objects, rendering him a hardy and experienced soldier in the shortest possible time.

If the capital was niggardly of praise, there were others who were not so ; and several of the princes whom the wandering band of soldiers aided for the time, distinguished the youth greatly, both by applause and rewards. He bore away from one a rich casque ; from another a splendid sword ; another gave him a jewel of much value ; another bestowed upon him a golden chain ; and at length the emperor himself called him forth, while the capital was sitting at meat with him, and asked what he could do to reward his gallant efforts in defence of the empire.

"He is as brave a youth, Sir Emperor," the capital replied, "as ever drew a sword, and there is nothing that you can do for him of which he will not show himself as worthy as any knight in all the land."

The emperor gazed upon him for a moment from head to foot, and then said, "Take the cup, young man, and give me to drink."

Albert approached the high officer who held the golden hannah on the monarch's right hand ; but the German noble hesitated for a moment to give him the cup, till the emperor signified his pleasure again by an inclination of the head. He then suffered Albert to take the hannah, while he himself filled it with wine ; and bending his knee, the youth offered it to the German sovereign, who took it with a smile, saying, "Do you know what this means, good youth ? It means that, noble or not noble heretofore, you are so from this moment. Go to our heralds, and bid them give you a coat of arms, and take this cup with which you have served me for your fee."

Had the monarch bestowed on him half his treasury, the gift would not have been so great to Albert Denyn ; and gladly he accompanied the capital on his way back towards France, bearing with him feelings changed, indeed, hopes raised, prospects widened, expectations excited ; but having still the same principles warm at his heart, the same passion strong in his bosom.

I have said his hopes were raised. Do not let my meaning be mistaken : the hopes that were entertained by Albert Denyn were of a kind difficult nowadays to be

conceived, and belonged entirely to the age he lived in and its chivalrous spirit. Far, far different were they from the warm and glittering hopes, which, like the beams of the summer sun, pervade the universe of the human heart, cheering, brightening, vivifying all things. In comparison with these, they were pale and cold, like the reflected light of the moon, shining brightly, it is true, upon some objects, but throwing long, dark shadows, too, upon those spots where the rays could not penetrate.

His hopes never reached to, never even approached, the very thought of winning her he loved for his own. What though he might now call himself noble; what though he might now be entitled to move in the same society as herself, yet he was well aware that there was no earthly chance of him, who had been but yesterday a serf, ever being considered worthy of one descended from a long line of glorious ancestors. The vision would have been a vain one, and, knowing that it must be so, he limited his highest expectations, and his most enthusiastic hopes, to the joy of showing her whom he loved—and by whose heart, he too well knew, he was loved in return—that he was worthy of that higher happiness of which he dared not even dream. Such hopes, indeed, he did entertain, and they were sufficient to make his return joyful.

There was something, too, in re-entering his native land, in crossing the frontier from a foreign state, in pronouncing the word France, and in feeling himself surrounded by all the bright associations which are gathered together for almost every man within the circle of his country, that added to his happiness; so that, perhaps, that moment in which we have depicted him returning from the far north of Germany to the land of his birth, was the brightest that he had known since first he had learned what it is to love.

Albert Denyn was glad that he was alone; for he could indulge his thoughts and his feelings without any eye to mark the changes which they might produce in his demeanour. He had sought, indeed, for the opportunity of preceding the capital by a few days in their return to France; and, though his leader remonstrated upon the risk of passing alone through a country which had been, when they left it, very nearly in a state of anarchy, Albert Denyn had pressed his request, and had been ac-

ordingly charged by the captal with letters and messages to the King of Navarre, one of the most extraordinary, though, unfortunately, not one of the most virtuous, personages of his day.

The young man-at-arms now rode on, confident in success, and we may say, also, conscious of strong powers of body and of mind; and certainly, as he looked round him and saw a well-cultivated country and a contented peasantry, his eye lighted upon nothing to create apprehension or diminish his joy at re-entering his native land. Situated upon the extreme frontier of France, and under the rule of great barons who had mingled but little in the desolating contest between France and England, the district which he was traversing had suffered comparatively little from the scourge of war. The desolating bands which had visited the other parts of France had not ventured thither; and the poor man sitting before his door, or the merry host of the little inn hanging up the garland upon the tall pole that gave notice of his vocation, spoke of peace and security, which went calmly and pleasantly to the heart of the wayfarer.

It was about six o'clock in the evening when Albert Denyn reached the small village of Orny, just upon the frontier of Champagne and Burgundy; and as his horse was tired by a long day's journey, he looked round him for some place of rest for the night. Inns were naturally more scarce in those days than they are at present, and were rarely to be found, except in great towns, or situated at certain distances from each other upon the most frequented high roads. There were, indeed, smaller places of accommodation, where the foot-passenger, or the peasant who drove his cattle to some neighbouring fair or market, could obtain repose and food, in almost every considerable village; but these auberges were seldom frequented by the traveller on horseback, and, indeed, were prohibited at one time from receiving him. The adventurous man-at-arms, however, the knight, or the leader of a troop, was very rarely unable to find lodging and refreshment. Hospitality was a chivalrous duty, and perhaps one of the most generally practised. Occasionally, indeed, the great lord, the baron of the neighbouring castle, the châtelain in his manoir, set at naught all the principles of knighthood, and exercised his hospitality in a very unpleasant man-

ner : but there was no medium ; and the traveller who had any claim, however small, to distinction, was sure either to be received and entertained with joy and liberality, or plundered, and, perhaps, murdered into the bargain.

Albert Denyn, however, had no inclination to try the welcome of the castle, if he could find food and rest anywhere else ; and he gazed inquiringly round the little village green, on the one side of which stood the church, and on the other a small but neat-looking house, with a little piece of vineyard attached to it, which he judged might be either that of some peasant well to do, or that of the curate of the parish. He was soon led to conclude that the latter was the case, by perceiving an elderly man in the habit of a priest crossing over from the church with a slow step and eyes bent down upon the ground, and approaching the door of the house after having passed through the little vineyard.

Albert Denyn had not been taught to philosophize, or to enter deeply into the metaphysics of the human character ; but to some men it is natural to take keen and rapid note of the various peculiarities in the appearance and demeanour of others, and to apply them as keys to read the inmost secrets of the heart. It is done almost unconsciously : we arrive at a judgment scarcely knowing how at the time ; and it requires thought, and the act of tracing back our course step by step, before we can tell how we came to the conclusion which we have reached.

Such was the case with Albert Denyn : it was a part of his nature to mark instantly each trait in the bearing of others ; and the habit had been still more strongly grafted in his mind during his service with the capital, whose keen and observant character had its influence on all who were long near him. Thus, as Albert's eye rested on the priest while crossing the small piece of vine, and remarked that the good old man neither turned to the right nor left, neither paused to examine whether the flower of his vineyard was going on prosperously, nor halted to look at some particular plant upon his path—for each man has his favourite, even in a vineyard—but walked silently on, with his eyes fixed heavily on the ground beneath his feet ; as he marked all this, the young man said to himself, "The good father has something heavy at his heart, not to notice the things in

which he usually takes pleasure. I must disturb him, however, to know where I can rest to-night;" and riding up to the vineyard just as the priest was opening the door of his cottage, he said, "Your blessing, my father!"

"You have it, my son," replied the priest, raising his eyes for the first time. "What would you farther?"

"I would merely know," replied Albert Denyn, "if there be any place near where I can lodge for the night?"

The priest gazed in his face for a minute or two inquiringly, and then, as if satisfied with what he had seen, replied, "Yes, my son, for the night you can lodge here: there is no other place within four leagues of this village, and you seem tired; but, alas! I can only give you lodging for one night, for I must hurry afar myself to other scenes, whence, perhaps, I may never return."

"Rest for the next six hours," answered Albert Denyn, "is all that I require, good father. On the morrow, too, I must wend forward on my way; and, indeed, were it not that my beast is weary, I would willingly go some leagues farther to-night."

"It is a noble beast," said the priest, looking at the horse, "and seems to bear you well. You will find a stable at the back of the house: there is room for him beside my mule: I will go in, and bid the maid prepare you some supper."

Albert Denyn took round his horse to the stable which the priest had mentioned, and, as every good man would do, cared fully for the accommodation of his dumb companion before he thought of his own. He then returned, and lifted the latch of the cottage door, which at once gave him admission, for no bolts and bars were there to keep out a marauder from the humble abode of the village curate. The room in which Albert found the good priest was a neat but simple chamber, with one or two wooden stools, a small table in the midst, and one at the side, which supported three books, a missal, a volume of homilies, and a Bible, in the ordinary Latin translation of the Roman Church. Above the whole rose an oaken crucifix, with the figure of the expiring Saviour, sculptured, not amiss, in the same wood. Upon it the eyes of the priest were fixed when Albert entered the room, bearing in them a peculiar expression, which the young soldier afterward recollected, and easily interpreted

when once he had got the key to his companion's feelings : that expression, though it had much humble piety in it, had much questioning meditation : it seemed to ask of the Saviour, "Thou who didst die to give peace to mankind, thou who art God as well as man, how is it that, notwithstanding thy ineffable love and mighty power, the same fearful passions, the same acts of blood and crime, disgrace that race for which thou hast made so awful a sacrifice ?"

The supper was soon served after Albert entered the room ; and the good man blessed the meal, but ate little himself, while the sadness which appeared in his whole countenance and manner gradually communicated itself to his younger companion, and quenched the temporary gayety with which he had returned to his native land. Albert longed to question his new acquaintance as to the cause of his care or sorrow, but he did not dare to do so openly ; for reverence towards age, and respect for the sacred character of the priesthood, had been early implanted in his mind ; and in those days it was neither a mode nor a custom to hold lightly every venerable institution. He approached the subject, however, saying, "Which way do you travel, good father, to-morrow, for I am journeying on into France, and perhaps may afford you some protection by the way ?"

"I am going towards Paris, my son," replied the priest ; "but I fear that a single arm would be but of very little avail against those who might be disposed to molest me."

"In some cases certainly but little," rejoined Albert Denyn ; "but there are other circumstances in which it might not prove so inefficient, good father. If it be the adventurers that you fear, they were as often to be found, when I left France, in bands of three or four, as in bands of fifty or sixty."

"And you think you could protect me against any three or four," said the priest, with a slight smile.

"I would do my best at least," answered Albert Denyn, the colour mounting in his cheek ; "I would do my best, good father, and I have seen some service."

"Your countenance speaks it, my son," replied the priest, looking at the scars which we have mentioned on the young man's cheek and brow ; "and willingly will I accept your company and protection if you go towards Paris. But you are very young to have seen

much service. In what wars have you borne arms ? You could not have been at Poitiers !”

“Not till the battle was over,” said Albert Denyn. “But I went to the field shortly after to seek for my lord, who was supposed to be dead. Since then,” he continued, “I have served with the noble Captal de Buch.”

“What, then !” exclaimed the priest, with a smile, “you are not a Frenchman !”

“Nay,” rejoined Albert, “I am a Frenchman altogether, and have never borne arms against my country. But I have been fighting under the capital’s banners for the emperor and some of the princes of Germany, and also in company with the Teutonic knights, against the pagans of Prussia.”

“That, at all events, is a noble cause,” replied the priest ; “but you may chance to meet with worse than pagans here, my young friend. Yet I will willingly take your escort ; for many of the bands of revolted peasants separate into parties of four and five, and I cannot but think that the arm of one gentleman such as yourself is at all events equal to those of four or five villeins.”

The blood mounted again into the cheek of Albert Denyn as he recollected how short a time he had possessed the right to bear the honourable name which the priest gave him, and how lately the contemptuous epithet applied to the peasantry might as well have been used to designate himself.

“I really do not know, father,” he answered, “but I will do my best to protect you ; yet I cannot but think that, among the peasantry of every country, there are as strong arms, as brave hearts, and as high spirits as among the nobles. We see that it is so in England, where there are no such class as that of villeins ; and, doubtless, it would be the same with the peasants of France if they had the same advantages.”

The priest gazed at him with a look of dark surprise, and, after a moment’s silence, exclaimed, “You astonish me ! But you have been long out of France, my son, and you do not know what has happened here, what is happening every day in this land of our birth. You have not heard of all the horrors that have been perpetrated within the last three months.”

“No, no,” cried Albert Denyn, with no slight surprise

and apprehension, as many an incident in the past recurred to his mind : seeds which might now be producing sad and terrible fruits for the nobility of France. " No, no, I have heard nothing ! No news has reached me from my native country since I quitted it in the autumn of last year."

" Then," said the priest, " there is a mournful tale to be told, and perchance the news may come sadly to your own heart ; the peasantry, oppressed as perhaps they really were, suffering as they certainly were, have risen in Beauvoisis, have spread over Picardy, and, as it were, mad with sorrow and endurance, are now committing, in their phrensy, crimes that will shut them out from the support of all good men, from the mitigation of their woes and wrongs, and from the attainment of the very ends they aim at. But, in the mean while, all is giving way before them ; castle after castle has been taken ; towns have been stormed ; the most dreadful massacres have been committed ; blood, desolation, and destruction are spreading over the whole face of France ; and those whom honourable warfare had spared, and the sword of the marauder had not yet reached, are falling by thousands under the scythes and the flails of these wild madmen."

" But they must have a leader," exclaimed Albert Denyn : " have any of the nobles joined them or the townspeople ?"

" None of the nobles," replied the priest, " and but few of the communes as yet ; but it would appear that the latter will soon give them too terrible help. In the mean time they are led by a fiend incarnate, whose heart Satan must possess entirely, for he has endowed his brain with talents which are but used for the purposes of desolation and destruction. No one seems to stand before him, no power has been found capable of opposing him ; and with the rude and unpractised hands of peasantry he has accomplished enterprises that would have set regular armies at defiance."

" What is his name ?" exclaimed Albert Denyn, starting up with a degree of emotion which the good priest did not understand, though the reader perhaps may.

" What is his name, good father ?"

" His name is William Caillet," replied the priest : " do you know him ?"

But, before the last words were uttered, Albert Denyn

had drawn his sword from the scabbard, and, holding up the cross of the hilt before his eyes, as was very common in the oaths of that day, he exclaimed, "God give him to my sword, as I swear never to use it except in self-defence, or for the protection of the wronged, against any other than him and his, till he or I be dead!"

"Amen," said the priest; "and God's blessing go with you, young man! But tell me more of this business: you seem to have been acquainted with this fiend in former days."

"I was! I was!" replied Albert Denyn; "and I know to what his infernal schemes tend."

As he spoke, and the thought presented itself to his mind of all the consequences towards Adela de Mauvinet and her noble father, which the successes of William Caillet might produce, a wild feeling of anxiety and alarm took possession of him, and he exclaimed, "Would that the capital were here! What shall I do? Where shall I find men? In Beauvoisis, you said, good father; in Beauvoisis and Picardy; not in Touraine?"

"All over France, my son," replied the priest: "the malady is more or less raging in every part of the country, though most powerfully in Picardy and the Beauvoisis. But come, you are much moved; tell me your history, and perhaps I can counsel you as to your future conduct. After that, we will pray God to give us health and sleep, in the trust that he will guide, guard, and deliver us."

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## CHAPTER X.

By daylight on the following morning, Albert Denyn and the priest were on their way towards Paris; but the countenance of the young cavalier had lost all the gaiety which it had presented on the preceding day; and the traces of deep anxiety were to be marked in every line, as he rode on discussing eagerly with his companion all the events which had taken place in France during the preceding winter. It seemed that he could never hear too much of the progress of the Jacquerie. He asked question after question, then paused for a moment

to meditate, till some new inquiry suggested itself to his mind ; and, although his fellow-traveller gave as distinct answers as he could, all seemed unsatisfactory, leaving a cloud of doubt and trouble on his countenance, which no explanation from the good priest could remove.

The truth is, that he found the nobility of France, the warrior class of a warlike nation, those who had affected peculiarly to themselves the right of bearing arms and waging battle, had been struck with a general panic by the rising of the peasantry, and, instead of making one powerful effort to crush the insurrection, had offered their throats, as it were, to the butchers, who had slain them with merciless determination. He asked himself what could be the cause of this conduct. Was it—as Caillet had so boldly asserted not long before—was it, that these men were really cowards, and that their courage only consisted in vain boasts and idle pretences ? or was there something in the sense of the oppression that they had exercised towards the peasantry, which weighed down their arms and took the spirit from their hearts ?

Such were some among the questions that Albert Denyn asked himself ; but he knew not one half of the circumstances which combined to paralyze for a time the power of the nobility of France, and to render the fiery courage which they undoubtedly possessed utterly unavailing against the unarmed multitudes of peasantry by whom they were assailed. The young soldier was not aware that universal disunion reigned among the higher classes, that it was difficult to find three gentlemen in all France who were striving for the same object, acting upon the same principles, or directed by the same views ; that during the absence and the imprisonment of the king, the whole realm was torn by contending factions, the capital itself in a state of insurrection against its legitimate prince, and each separate castle throughout the country tenanted by those who differed from the inhabitants of the neighbouring one in every principle and every purpose, and were often in actual warfare with them.

The sense of common danger had not yet convinced the nobles of the necessity of even temporary union ; and, consequently, though the ravages of the peasantry spread consternation among them, yet each saw his neighbour butchered without making an effort to help

him, and often laughed at the fate of his enemy, when the same knife that had murdered him was wellnigh at his own throat.

All these things, however, Albert Denyn had still to learn, and the facts that he saw, without comprehending the causes, at once perplexed, surprised, and dismayed him. Still, among the crowd of vague and anxious thoughts which hurried through his brain, there were fears and doubts respecting the fate of the house of Mauvinet which made his heart sink. He knew that it had been the intention of the count to visit his territories in the north of France, though he tried to console himself with the hope that, as the year had been far advanced when he left Touraine, the purpose of the Lord of Mauvinet might have been delayed in execution, and that he and his household might have remained in a part of the country where the insurrection of the peasantry was not so general, and where the strength of his dwelling-place would enable him to set such foes at defiance.

The good priest marked the trouble of his young companion's mind, and sought, as far as possible, to give him relief; but although Albert had afforded him some insight into his previous history, he did not completely comprehend all the deep anxiety that the young soldier felt; for there were parts of his connexion with the house of Mauvinet which to no living ear would Albert Denyn have uttered for the wealth of worlds, and those were more especially the parts which gave poignancy, almost to agony, to the apprehensions which he entertained.

Of the Lord of Mauvinet himself the priest could tell nothing; he had some vague recollection of that nobleman having been among those summoned to hold council with the regent in Paris; and certainly he had not heard his name mentioned as one of those who had suffered from the ravages of the peasantry; but, nevertheless, although he saw that the young soldier was more deeply interested in the fate of that nobleman than was usual with any dependant of a noble house, yet he was forced to admit that he himself might have been murdered and his castle destroyed without the tidings reaching that part of the country.

"It was more than three weeks," he added to what he had been saying on the subject, "before the unfortunate news which now takes me to Paris found its way to my dwelling, though 'tis but a two days' journey."

"May I ask," said Albert Denyn, "what is the nature of your errand, good father? I have seen that you were sad—very sad; but I did not like to inquire the cause till you alluded to it yourself."

"There is no secret in it, my son," replied the priest; "but though sympathy is a soothing thing, I did not mention the occasion of my grief, because I believe that we have no right to load others with the burden of our sorrow, unless they themselves seek to share it. I will tell you the story, however, to-night at our first resting-place, if we reach one in safety; but the tale is somewhat long, and might bring tears into my eyes."

Albert pressed him no farther, but rode on conversing with the good old man of other matters, and remarking from time to time the changes which became apparent in the face of the country. After pursuing their journey for about two hours, everything indicated that they were entering those districts which, for the last three months, had been a scene of continued strife and confusion. Here and there a smoking ruin was to be seen, sometimes of a village, sometimes of a castle. All the small towns through which the road passed were fortified and barricaded at each end, in the best manner that the inhabitants could devise. No man was met altogether unarmed, except in the very smallest hamlets; and at the first sight of Albert Denyn's crest and plume, the shepherds in the fields, unless two or three were together, set off running towards the nearest wood, leaving their sheep in charge of the dogs. The stumps of fruit-trees, which had been cut down and used for firing in those parts of the country where no forests were near, showed the lawless recklessness of the bands which had swept the land during the winter; and in many places, fields, untilled and unsown, but rank with weeds and wild grass, told a terrible tale of depopulation and despair.

A little before sunset the two travellers rode up the gentle slope of a hill, from the summit of which they perceived a wide plain, slightly undulating and marked by long lines of light and shade, as the sweeps of the ground and the masses of distant woods caught or obstructed the rays of the declining sun. The golden light of evening was in the sky, and spread more or less over the whole scene, mingling even with the blue shadows, and giving them a warmer and a richer hue. In the

foreground, at about a mile's distance, was a village bosome in elms, with the square spire of the church, new built and white with freshness, rising above the trees and shining bright in the evening sun. Everything was beautiful, and calm, and peaceful; and it was scarcely possible to conceive that the fierce and cruel passions which were ravaging the rest of France could exercise their virulent activity in so tranquil a scene as that.

It was so, however; and as Albert Denyn and his companion rode into the village, they found the grass growing in the little street as thick as in a meadow. Several of the houses had been burned, others were scorched with fire, but had been afterward extinguished, and the only buildings that seemed to have escaped were the church and the priest's house adjoining.

As they passed by the churchyard, Albert perceived a number of fresh-made graves, which told their own sad tale, and he inquired no farther. It was to the habitation of the curate that they now bent their way; and Albert's fellow-traveller knocked some time for admittance without the door being opened, while first a female, and then a male head, examined the wayfarers closely through a window at the side. At length a strong middle-aged man in a priest's garments opened the door, and instantly recognising one of his visitors, exclaimed, "Ah! Monsieur Dacy, is it you?"

"It is, indeed, my good brother," replied the curé. "I have come, with a young friend here, to claim your hospitality for a night; shall we be safe?"

"Oh yes," answered the priest, "quite safe will you be, though I always like to see who it is before I draw a bolt, that I may be prepared for the worst. Yet those burned houses at the end of the place, and those fresh graves, are as good as a fortification. If any band of plunderers come, they know by those signs that others have been here before them, and they turn away again for some better booty. You shall be right welcome, my good friend; but how is it, Father Dacy, that you leave your own pleasant village, which has, as I hear, escaped hitherto?"

"I will tell you presently," said the good priest; "but let us first take care of our beasts."

The welcome that the travellers received was hearty and kind: the food which the priest set before them was, indeed, as homely as it well could be, but it was abun-

dant, and the evening passed tranquilly, though the chief topic of conversation during the meal was the sorrows and miseries of the land. Such a subject naturally led the good Curé Dacy to explain the cause of his present journey; and although he had told Albert that the tale was long, yet the pain that the relation occasioned to himself made him shorten it as much as possible.

"You know," he began, addressing the priest of the place, "that my brother, animated by a more ambitious spirit than I ever possessed, had raised himself high in the world, and had become one of the advocates general of the king."

"Had!" exclaimed the priest: "you speak as if he were so no longer."

"Neither is he," answered the Curé Dacy, "for he is in a bloody grave. He was one of those bold or brave men who most strongly advised the Duke of Normandy to resist the ambition of the Prévôt Marcel; and with the Marshals of Normandy and Champagne drew upon themselves the anger of the whole faction. The great men escaped; but my poor brother, in passing through the streets with his daughter—just at the time that the bad King of Navarre was haranguing the people in the Pré aux Clercs—was attacked by a furious mob, and fled into the shop of a confectioner for safety. The man would willingly have saved him and his child, and was putting up the boards before the shop to keep the people out; but, ere he could do it, three or four leaped up upon the booth where his wares were exposed, and sprang into the inside. My brother defended himself well with a beam he had caught up; his poor child clung to the knees of his assassins, and besought them to be merciful; but, in spite of all, they murdered him before her very eyes, and would, most likely, have killed her also, as she lay fainting and deluged with her father's blood, had not Marcel himself come by at that moment, and rescued her from their hands. As soon as she could, she sent messengers to me, beseeching me to come as speedily as possible; for in the house of the prévôt she is without protection, and surrounded by the youth of a wild, licentious party, who have as little respect for innocence as they have for law or order. I am hastening, therefore, to Paris to take her quickly from among them, though Heaven only knows whether I shall ever return alive myself, or whether they will suffer her to accompany me."

After the Curé Dacy stopped, Albert Denyn remained for a moment or two in deep thought, while the good priest of the place spoke a few words of comfort to his sorrowing brother. At length, however, the young soldier looked up, and asked, though still with an air of meditation, "Is the King of Navarre, then, still in Paris?"

"Nay, my son," answered Monsieur Dacy, "not only is he in Paris, but he and Marcel rule all there; so that the life of the regent himself is every hour in danger."

"Can he aid," demanded Albert, "in making them give your niece up to you, and in securing your safety and free departure?"

"None so much," replied the priest; "for they report that Marcel is but his tool, and totally dependant upon him."

"Well, then," said Albert Denyn, "perhaps I can help you more than either I or you expected."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Dacy, with much surprise; "do you know him, then?"

"No," answered Albert, with a smile, "I do not know him, and cannot well explain to you the whole matter. This much I may say, however, I have letters to him both from the Count de Foix and the noble Captal de Buch, and he is likely to attend to anything that I may ask."

"God be praised, then," cried the priest, "God be praised for sending you to my assistance, young man; for this King of Navarre is as lawless as any of the other rovers that torture our poor land of France. We are told that his partisans are even more cruel and barbarous than the rest; and as for himself, nothing stays him but the consideration of his own pleasure or his own interest."

"A sweet character, good father," replied Albert Denyn; "but it will be for his own interest to attend to what I say."

"Will it so?" exclaimed a voice very different in tone and accent from any of those which had been yet speaking. All eyes were directed at once to the low narrow door of the small chamber, just behind the back of Albert Denyn. It had been left ajar to give air to the room, which was close and hot; and it was opening as Albert turned his head, presenting a sight that made him

instantly rise, front the doorway, and without farther ceremony draw his sword from the sheath.

"Put up, put up your sword," said the voice which had just spoken; and at the same moment a person entered the room, completely armed except the head, and having nothing in his hand but a leading staff, while a page followed with his helmet, and two or three men-at-arms were seen looking over his shoulder. He was somewhat less than the middle size, but formed with wonderful grace, and his countenance was as beautiful as it was possible to conceive, somewhat effeminate, indeed, in features and gentle in expression. The tone of his voice, too, harmonized perfectly with the rest, being peculiarly melodious and soft; and there was even a degree of languor in his sleepy, dark eye, which gave the idea of a character and disposition very different from those of the turbulent, ruthless, wily person who now stood before the young soldier and his companions. "Put up your sword, young gentleman," he said, "for you can do nothing with it: we are many and you are few."

"Very true," replied Albert Denyn; "but few have often done much against many, and, therefore, I do not put up my sword until I know what is your purpose, fair sir. Neither will it be very safe," he added, "to advance another step farther till you have explained that purpose."

"It is quite peaceable," answered the stranger, regarding the youthful man-at-arms with a smile. "The truth is, that, having ridden somewhat late, my horses being tired and my men in need of repose, I have come hither to seek a night's lodging, without the intention of hurting any one; no, not even the good priest who was giving me so high a character but now. I shall take no notice of his words, let him rest assured."

"Doubtless your grace will not," said Albert Denyn; "for, to an honourable man, a thing so overheard must be as if it had never been spoken."

"Not on that account," replied the King of Navarre, for he it was, "but because the good priest's speech suited me well. Every one has his taste in this world, and the character which would please others may not please me. It is a very wholesome and good reputation that I have found in his mouth; one that I have long sought to establish. No man after that can mistake my

views and purposes. He who trusts me is a fool, except it be my interest to keep faith with him. He who fears me is wise, and will take care not to offend me. Now, good father, see to the lodging of my people, and give me a share of your supper." Thus saying, he passed by Albert Denyn, and took a seat calmly at the table.

The young gentleman put his sword up into the sheath, and the two priests stood by, gazing for a moment or two upon the King of Navarre and his followers with astonishment, not unmixed with fear. At length, however, the king made an impatient movement with his hand, saying, "Do as I bid you!" and the curate of the place quietly slipped out of the chamber to follow the orders he had received.

"And now, young gentleman," continued the King of Navarre, drawing one of the dishes towards him, and loading a clean trencher which happened to stand near with its contents, "tell me, while I eat my supper, how it may be my interest to attend to what you say. Such, I think, was your expression just as I entered."

"It was so, your grace," replied Albert Denyn; "and the reason I made use of such words was, that I bear you letters of some importance from the noble Capital de Buch, who allows me to add that he holds me in some esteem."

"That alters the case," rejoined the King of Navarre, "and you have said right; I have too high regard for my cousin the capital not to treat with all reverence his messengers. Besides," he continued, with a laugh, "whether I regard him or not, the capital can serve me. Where are your letters, young man! yet keep them," he added, seeing Albert Denyn put his hand into the bosom of his surcoat. "I am sleepy to-night; you shall deliver them to-morrow to me in Paris. I shall set off at four in the morning: you come after quickly, and seek me at the Abbey of St. Germain des Prés. Bring you good priest with you, too; and if he have any favour to require at our hands we will grant it him, in consideration of the sweet character that he gave us not long since."

The dark smile which followed the latter part of his speech might well make the good Curé Dacy feel somewhat doubtful of the king's intentions; but Charles the Bad took no farther notice of him during the few min-

utes that he stayed in the room, finishing his supper quickly, and then betaking himself to sleep in the priest's own bed.

Every one found a place of repose where he could for the night, and early on the following morning the King of Navarre departed, leaving much fewer traces of his visit behind him than was usually the case. Some of his soldiers, indeed, had slept on straw in the church, and, as might be expected, the door of the sacristy was found broken open, and the place itself stripped of all that it contained; for where Charles appeared in person very little reverence was shown to the church; and those things which even the most ruthless bands of plunderers spared were sure to disappear during one of his visitations.

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## CHAPTER XI.

It was about three o'clock on the following day when Albert Denyn and the good priest Dacy entered the city of Paris; but let the reader remember, that by those words, *the city of Paris*, we do not in the least mean to imply anything like that great and extraordinary abode of talent and folly, virtue and crime, distinguished by a similar name in the present day. The city of Paris at that period was inferior in extent to many provincial towns of our own times, and very much inferior, indeed, to any provincial town in point of comfort and accommodation, cleanliness and neatness. Only a few of the principal streets were paved; all were so narrow that in most of them not more than three horses could go abreast; sand, filth, and ordure filled the lesser thoroughfares; and the ways were seldom, if ever, cleansed, except when the autumnal inundations of the Seine washed away the dirt that had accumulated during the past year, and sometimes carried off several of the houses likewise. Here and there, indeed, rose, from the midst of the wild and confused mass of hovels and cabins which then formed the French capital, some of those splendid monuments of architectural genius which are never sufficiently marvelled at and appreciated, except when we look to the state of society

and art at the time of their construction. Here appeared a magnificent church, there a vast abbey, there a noble palace, and everywhere was seen, amid wooden houses and mere huts, tracery of stonework so fine and beautiful that modern times have never been able to approach the excellence of the execution, even when they have ventured upon the labour and expense.

Albert Denyn, however, and the priest were both full of anxious thoughts, which left little room for new impressions to penetrate. When man is at ease in himself, and the mind, as it were, idle in its empty house, it is natural that the spirit should look out of the window and mark everything that is passing in the world without; but when there is business within of high moment, the casements are closed against external objects, while the soul holds council in the secret chambers of the heart.

The young cavalier and his companion, then, rode along in silence, giving little attention to the mere physical appearance of the city they had entered, the one having seen it many times before, the other having come lately from foreign towns at that time far more splendid than the French capital itself.

There were other sights, however, of a kind calculated to awaken Albert Denyn's habit of observation, which now crossed his eyes as he rode on guided by the priest. Crowds of people were seen hurrying hither and thither, and every now and then four or five persons would pause as they passed to gaze at the two wayfarers who were entering the great city, regarding them apparently with no very friendly looks, and making comments as they went on, which the young soldier judged, from a word or two that reached his ear, to be of a somewhat offensive and menacing nature. He remarked, too, that almost everybody whom he met, whatever might be the variety of colours and materials in other parts of their garments, had one piece of dress uniformly alike. This was the hood, which was the general covering for the head used in that day; and not one Parisian out of a hundred that the travellers passed in the streets was without a *cha-peron*, as it was called, of party-coloured cloth or silk, half red, half green, with an enamelled clasp under the chin.

"How is it," demanded Albert, "that the people of

Paris have their hoods all of one colour, good father ! Is there any law to that effect ?”

“The law of fear, my son,” answered the priest : “that party-coloured hood is the mark of the prévôt’s party ; and if you were to look at the clasp, you would find enamelled on it the words *à bonne fin*. It was taken at first only by those who thought the prévôt was right ; but since men have found that life is not safe without that mark of partisanship, even those that hate him the most have adopted it too. God send that we get much farther in safety without it.”

Scarcely had he spoken when a body of armed citizens stopped Albert Denyn and himself, demanding, “Where go you, gentlemen travellers, and who are you for !”

Albert Denyn answered at once that they were going towards the Abbey of St. Germain des Près to seek the King of Navarre ; and, as it fortunately happened that the interrogators were of the prévôt’s party, with whom Charles the Bad was leagued, the reply was satisfactory, and the two were told to pass on their way in peace.

They met with no farther interruption till they reached the small square before the eastern gate of the Abbey of St. Germain, where on the one side appeared the inn or hostelry of the Red Hat ; on the other, the bridge of the abbey ditch ; and between the church and the tavern, that ancient instrument of disgrace and punishment, the pillory.

A sturdy porter stopped Albert Denyn and his companion at the entrance of the monastery, demanding whom they sought ; and on the reply being given, told them that the King of Navarre was at that moment in the *champ clos* of the Près aux Clercs hard by, and had left particular orders that if any messengers from the Capital de Buch came to seek him, they were to be sent thither with all speed. Albert and his companion accordingly turned the heads of their beasts towards the rich meadows that at that time extended westward of the Abbey of St. Germain, and soon reached a spot where the murmuring sound of many voices showed that a number of people were assembled. In a minute or two after entering the space set apart for judicial combats, they found themselves in the midst of eight or ten thousand Parisians, who were crowding round the

raised platform of wood from which, the judges of the field generally witnessed the duels that took place below.

The front seats on the scaffold were now occupied by the King of Navarre, his officers and partisans; and from it he was addressing the people in a strain of eloquent blandishment, well calculated to gain the affections of the easily flattered multitude. At the same time, it was evident that he laboured hard to inspire them with a great idea of his power and influence, and to show, that although the dauphin and royal family of France had proclaimed themselves his enemies, yet many of the greatest men in Europe held him in high veneration and respect. He was mentioning the names of several great leaders as friendly to him when Albert Denyn entered; and it now became evident with what view he had refused to receive the letters which the young soldier bore him from the Captal de Buch on the preceding night, reserving them to work their effect on the Parisians at the present moment.

"Who have we here?" he exclaimed, as his eyes fell upon Albert. "What seek you, young gentleman?" Albert's errand was soon told; but the Navarrese monarch caused him to ascend the platform, and deliver his despatches before the eyes of the crowd. He then affected to consult with him long apart, and in the end announced to the willing ears around that his noble cousin, the famous Captal de Buch, had promised him the aid of his whole forces and his great renown. He pointed out Albert as a young gentleman high in the confidence of the captal, sent on purpose from Germany to bear him tidings of his speedy approach, and he then turned to the young soldier, asking what guerdon he would have for the good intelligence he bore.

Albert smiled at the farce that was played before his eyes, not having yet sufficiently mingled in the busy scenes of life to know that, in nine cases out of ten, "all the world is indeed a stage," though in a different sense from that of the great poet, "and all the men and women merely players."

He forgot not, however, the errand of his reverend companion, Monsieur Dacy, and he replied, in a low voice, "I ask no guerdon, your grace; but I do beseech you to take measures that this good man's niece shall be given up to him, and that he shall have free passage with her out of Paris."

"Let me hear more of his story," said the Navarrese ; "speak quick and low, and I will do what I can."

Albert answered briefly, and the wily King of Navarre seemed to listen to him with one ear, while with the other he gathered the sense of a long and vehement oration, which was commenced, as if to fill up the time, by a tall, powerful man, with a party-coloured chaperon, who stood near the king. Ever and anon, too, Charles the Bad would interrupt his conference with Albert, either to address a word to the speaker in a low tone, or to express his loud approbation of what was uttered.

"You say she is in the prévôt's house," he proceeded, talking to the young soldier ; and then added aloud, "it is true, every word of it. Excellent ! excellent ! Keep off the subject of the money, Marcel. Now, my friend, she shall be set free, and all aid given to good Monsieur Dacy. Our good Parisians will not hurt him : they have had one out of the family, and that is surely enough. Now, Marcel, dismiss them with a benediction, and speak to me here."

The last words were spoken to the orator ; and Albert turned to gaze upon the famous man before him, not doubting, from the name by which the King of Navarre addressed him, that the person who had been haranguing the people was the well-known prévôt des marchands. His countenance was somewhat bull-like, but in other respects not disagreeable ; and there certainly was a high intellectual expression in the forehead and eyes, though the mouth and lower part of the face was heavy and earthly.

Marcel soon brought his speech to a conclusion, upon the hint of his confederate, and the multitude began slowly to disperse, while the prévôt came closer to the King of Navarre, and heard what he had to tell him, examining Albert Denyn narrowly from head to foot as he listened.

"And you are the lady's lover, I suppose," he said, addressing the young soldier as soon as the King of Navarre had finished.

"You mistake, my good sir," replied Albert, in a tone of very little reverence ; "I never saw her in my life. It is for her uncle I am moved."

"A disinterested youth !" cried the prévôt, with a sneer ; "we must not keep him long in Paris, or the metal will get tarnished. However, if that be her uncle,

he shall have my help to take her from my house as quickly as may be; for my wild nephew would fain have her for his paramour, and I approve not of such follies. You should thank me for saving her from the rough hands into which she had fallen when I found her," continued Marcel, addressing the priest. But the good old man shook his head with a mournful air, answering, "My brother's blood, sir, were surely weight enough upon the hand that slew him, without the blood of his unhappy child."

"I slew not your brother," replied the prévôt, sternly; "he was partly answerable for his own death. Why did he meddle with things that concerned him not? However, you shall have your niece, and God speed you home with her. Who has an inkhorn here? Maître Jacques, you have some parchment; give me two fingers' breadth."

Thus saying, he wrote a few words hastily on the parchment, commanding those of his household to give up to the Curé Dacy the daughter of his brother, and to suffer him to depart with her in peace. He then put the order into the poor man's hand, who received it with tears of joy, and, taking leave of Albert Denyn, not without regret, left the spot to seek his niece at once.

The King of Navarre and the prévôt stood silent for a moment after Dacy had left them, gazing apparently with some interest at the young soldier, who had cast down his eyes thoughtfully upon the ground, and remained for a very brief space absorbed in deep meditation, though surrounded by scenes and people that might well call for active presence of mind.

"And so now, young man, you are thinking what you are to do next," said the prévôt, as Albert looked up again.

"Not so," replied Albert; "I have no doubts of the kind."

"Why, how, then, do you intend to bestow yourself?" demanded the prévôt.

"I intend to take up my lodging for the night at the sign of the Red Hat, before the gate of the abbey," Albert replied; "and to-morrow I set forth again, either for Touraine or the Beauvoisis, according to the information I receive this night."

The prévôt looked at him for an instant in silence, and then asked, "Will you sup with me to-night, young gentleman?"

Albert's first impulse was to refuse ; but the moment after he thought, "I shall hear more there of all that is passing in France than I can anywhere else ;" and he accordingly answered, "Willingly, sir ; at what hour ?"

"At the hour of seven," replied the prévôt ; and Albert, remounting his horse, rode away towards the inn which he had seen before the gate of the Abbey of St. Germain.

"What want you with that youth ?" demanded the King of Navarre, as Albert turned from them ; "he is a clever lad, but raw ; yet, doubtless, a stout man-at-arms."

"I want many such, most noble king," answered the prévôt : "we are all busy with such things that it is well to have help at hand, in case of need. Six strong men, such as that, in his anteroom, would have saved Charles of Spain from the knife."

"I think not, Marcel," replied the King of Navarre, speaking of the murder which he had committed not long before with the same calm carelessness with which the prévôt had himself alluded to it ; "I think not ; for I had twenty such with me, so that six would have been of small service. However, I beseech you, take care of the youth here in Paris ; for the captal writes in such terms of him, that were any evil to happen to him, it might deprive us of our best hopes. You know the captal as well as I do."

"I will guard him as the apple of my eye," replied the prévôt ; "but let us go."

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## CHAPTER XII.

ALBERT DENYN found his way back to the *Chapeau Rouge*, and, like all true men-at-arms, provided for the accommodation of his horse before he attended in any degree to himself. Nor, to say the truth, did he feel disposed to eat ; for there had come upon him that feeling of oppression which the thoughtful and imaginative mind experiences in scenes through which the mere man of action passes with no other sensation than that of animal exertion. If he have but a heart, the man of the strongest intellect and most daring courage will find

at certain moments, when surrounded by the whirlwind of passions and the storm of party strife, a shadow fall upon him like that of a storm-cloud rushing over a summer sky. Without any definite reflections upon the emptiness of human endeavours, without any philosophic thought upon the baseness of human nature, and the lowness of even man's highest earthly objects, a sensation of weariness and disgust at all that is passing around us will benumb us for a time, till some strong excitement calls us to mingle in the very scenes, to take part in the very deeds which had produced the loathing. Then even we rise up like a slave to his appointed labour, and feel that we are but buckling on the burden of human destiny, till we are fully launched in a sea of exertions, and the more earthly portion of our mixed life in the excitement of action overcomes the heavenly.

Albert entered the inn, and, as the hour of supper was still at some distance, sat down at a table in the hall, and leaned his head upon his hand in deep thought. He had no active part in the things that were passing round him ; he had but to stand by, and see the busy passions and fierce deeds of others ; to witness the cunning of one, the bold knavery of another, the fierce ambition of a third, and the evils that were the result of all. He had but, as I have said, to stand by and look on ; and it seemed as if the splendid veil with which all the things of earth invest themselves had dropped down, and that he beheld at once the dust and ashes of which the whole is composed. These moments come to every one at some time or another in life ; moments when we look, as it were, prophetically into the coffin of human desire and enjoyment, and see the mouldering bones and crumbling clay of those two bright children of earthly existence, as at some future period we may expect to behold them from the height of an after and a better state of being.

His thoughts first turned to the King of Navarre, and then to Marcel, and he asked himself, "Are these the men for whom France sheds her best blood ? How vain, how very vain, are all the quarrels and dissensions of life ! Well might the good prior say, that sooner or later I would see that the world I would not quit is a world of emptiness and sorrow, with scarce a grain of real gold to gild it for the eyes of children."

Such was for some time the train that his thoughts

followed, but we need not pursue them farther ourselves. Almost every one in the end rises from such contemplations better, perhaps, than when he sat down; but still with a feeling that they too are vain; that, tied as we are to the burden of mortal existence, it is useless to inquire of what it is composed, or to try in a fine balance the weight of that which we are bound to bear.

After resting thus, then, for about half an hour, Albert rose up suddenly, and, tightening the belt that held his sword, strolled forth into the streets, saying to himself, "I must gather some tidings in the city of what is passing in Touraine or Beauvoisis."

Who ever saw Paris, except in the dead of night, without her myriads rushing here and there in the fierce pursuit of pleasure, vengeance, amusement, or folly? If the gay capital ever was still, such was not the case when Albert Denyn now issued out of the Chapeau Rouge. For the moment, indeed, the vicinity of the Abbey of St. Germain was comparatively deserted, the tide having flowed another way after the prévôt and the King of Navarre had left the Pré aux Clercs; but a very few minutes brought the young soldier into the midst of crowds of men, and women, and children, all seeming as busy and as gay as if the whole world was happiness and industry. Everywhere were seen the chaperons of red and green, and even the women affected the well-known colours in their garments, so that any one passing along the thronged thoroughfares without such a symbol might well be remarked by the eager eyes of a population always ready to quarrel with those who give them any or no offence. Scarcely had Albert reached the bridge, when five strong men walking nearly abreast, and talking vehemently, stopped him rudely, and examined him from head to foot, exclaiming, "Where is the chaperon? Where the clasp?"

Albert Denyn felt his blood boil within him, and would willingly have replied with the sword; but, outmatched as he was by the persons who opposed his passage, and knowing well that if even he escaped from them, that he was surrounded on every side by partisans of the same faction, he answered with an appearance of calmness that he did not feel, "I have been but a few hours at Paris; let me go on!"

"Ay, that is some reason," replied one of the men.

"Why, he is the man who was speaking with the prévôt," said another.

"One of those English dogs," exclaimed a third: "the prévôt is too fond of them;" but at the same time the speaker drew back with the rest, and suffered the young soldier to pursue his way. For some distance he was not subject to any farther annoyance, although the peculiar air and manner which always indicates the stranger in a town, which he has not frequently or lately visited, pointed him out to the eyes of the Parisians, and called attention to his want of those party symbols under which alone safety was to be found in the French capital.

At length, however, as he entered one of the streets leading from the water's edge towards the great hotel of St. Paul, he observed a crowd of people gathered together at the distance of some three hundred yards from him, and as he approached he heard remonstrances uttered in a loud voice, mingled with urgent complaints and entreaties. There was a sufficient portion of the chivalrous spirit in the breast of Albert Denyn to make him take part eagerly with the weak and the distressed; and although he knew that his single hand could be of but little service where so many persons were engaged, he could not refrain from scanning the crowd with his eyes as he approached, in order to ascertain who was the sufferer whose entreaties met his ear.

For a moment or two he could only see a number of people all pressing round one particular spot; but the next moment, as the mob swayed to and fro, he caught a glimpse of a man in a clerical habit, and thought he recognised the form of the good Curé Dacy. He was instantly springing forward to satisfy himself of the fact, when a hand was laid upon his arm; and, turning sharply round, he beheld another group of soldiery, who had come up the street behind him with a quicker step than his own. The face of the person who held him appeared familiar to him, though in the various scenes of strife and contention in which he had lately been engaged he had seen so many men of different grades and characters that he could not connect it with any particular train of events. There was a smile upon the soldier's countenance, too, which seemed to show that his recollection was better than that of Albert himself.

The latter, however, hastily disengaged his arm, exclaiming, "I cannot stop: they are hurting the poor old  
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man, and I must help him. Who are you? what do you want?"

"Do you not recollect the Captain Griffith?" said the personage who had detained him. "But what are you going to do with these fellows? They are too many for you, if I judge what you are about rightly."

"Then give me some help," cried Albert Denyn: "they are maltreating the poor old man Dacy, and his niece too: do you not see her?"

"Oho! is that the game?" exclaimed Griffith. "Well, lead on, we will aid you, though it is no business of ours after all. Still it keeps one in exercise, and that is something in this world."

Albert Denyn darted forward, followed by Griffith and the four or five free companions who were with him, and, pushing their way with fierce recklessness through the mob, they were soon in the centre, where a young man of handsome person, but of somewhat loose and dissolute appearance, was dragging a very lovely girl away from the arms of the good old Curé Dacy, in spite of her tears, remonstrances, and cries. The people who stood round took little part in the matter, except by laughter at the poor girl's agony, and the priest's grief and reproaches.

The scene, however, was changed in a minute: for Albert Denyn with one blow of his gauntleted hand struck the young ribald to the ground, while Dacy caught his niece in his arms, and Griffith and his companions drove back the crowd on both sides.

Swords were instantly drawn on the part of the Parisians; but Albert Denyn, unsheathing his own weapon, placed his foot on the prostrate body of the youth he had knocked down, exclaiming, "Take care, my men, take care, or worse may come of it. This fellow I have found violating the commands of the prévôt, and I will drag him to the Hôtel de Ville, or kill him if he resists."

"Why it is the prévôt's own nephew," cried several voices from the crowd.

"I know that," replied Albert Denyn, "or, at least, I guess it from what the prévôt said."

The people seemed to hesitate, in consequence of what they heard and saw; and, probably, the matter might have ended peaceably, but some of those on the right pressed rather sharply upon one of Griffith's men,

who, not being of a very patient and enduring race, struck the Parisian who was next to him a blow in the face with the pommel of his sword, which dashed out three of his front teeth, and cast him back, bleeding, on those behind.

An instant shout of indignation burst from the crowd, and a tremendous rush was made upon the small knot of soldiery who were gathered round the good Curé Dacy and his niece. Albert Denyn thrust himself between the poor girl and the foremost of the mob. Griffith's practised sword waved not in vain; and, to say truth, though the numbers who were opposed to the Parisians were but small, yet their great superiority in the use of their arms, their daring habits, vigorous frames, and thorough contempt for their enemies, rendered each man there, in reality, equal to four or five of their assailants, so that the strife was by no means as unequal as it appeared.

After but a few blows had been given, the armed crowd recoiled, with several severe gashes apparent among the foremost of them; and Griffith, with Albert Denyn, as if comprehending at once what was best to be done, began to force their way onward, with the rest surrounding the poor girl and her uncle, as if to guide them in safety towards the Hôtel de Ville.

For a minute or two the mob continued to give way before the brandished weapons of the adventurers; but it soon became apparent that numbers were flocking up to the aid of the Parisians. A more formidable attack than ever was made at the corner of the next street; and one of Griffith's men was brought to the ground, stunned by the blow of a mace, which dented in his steel cap, and wellnigh fractured his skull. Griffith himself stepped forward to defend him, but in so doing he left a gap in their little circle. The nephew of the prévôt, who was then, again, at the head of his people, dashed in with two of the others, in spite of all the efforts of Albert Denyn, and once more seized his prey; and the situation of the young soldier, his companions, and the object of his interest, appeared nearly desperate, when a cry of "Marcel! Marcel! Long live the prévôt!" came thundering down the street, and a confused troop of horse and foot rushed on, driving in the stragglers, and making a way into the very heart of the crowd.

"What is this? What is this?" exclaimed the *Prévôt* Marcel, springing to the ground and catching his nephew with a vehement and angry grasp. "Jean, you are a licentious fool! Did I not forbid this? Did I not give orders that the girl should be suffered to depart!"

As he spoke, he thrust the young man vehemently from him; but at the same instant came first a low murmur, and then a loud shout from the mob, with the words, "Down with the English! Away with the adventurers!"

Marcel looked fiercely round him for a moment, first turning his eyes upon the citizens, and then upon his own armed followers. But one or two of the latter had taken up the cry also, and were vociferating with the rest, "Down with them! down with them! down with the English!" The *prévôt* saw that, whatever might be his inclination, he would find but little support among his own people in any endeavour that he might make to protect the adventurers; and, like all fierce demagogues, though internally furious at any opposition on the part of those whom he was accustomed to lead blindfold, he determined to temporize and yield to their clamour, with a strong determination of taking vengeance at a future period upon the chief of those who opposed his will.

"Fear not, my friends," he exclaimed in a loud and impressive tone: "your *prévôt* will do equal justice upon all offenders. Stand back, my men, stand back, and let my train gather round us; we will deal with the Englishmen, and treat them according to their deserts."

The aspect of affairs now began to be serious; for Griffith and his companions and Albert Denyn himself could catch no glance of recognition upon the *prévôt's* countenance.

"A pretty pass!" cried Griffith, as he saw the forty or fifty well-armed soldiers of which the *prévôt's* train was composed gather in a stern circle round him, and the rest, keeping back the crowd, but presenting a much more formidable array than the undisciplined multitude. "Let us stand back to back, my men, for we know not on which side we shall be taken: we can make a pretty little hash of them yet, if they come near. Now, Master *Prévôt*, what is it that you mean by this? Are we not your friends, and the friends of the King of Navarre?"

"Not when I find you brawling in the streets," said the prévôt, affecting a fierce tone ; but the moment after he beckoned to Albert Denyn, saying, "You, at least, are a Frenchman ; approach and speak to me."

"They came to help me," replied Albert Denyn, "in protecting this poor girl and the priest, who were attacked contrary to your own orders. For good or ill, I will take my part with them."

"Well done, my young gallant," cried Griffith : "you will soar high some of these days."

But, in the mean time, the prévôt made a quick and angry gesture, exclaiming, "Come hither, I say : you will make mischief speedily. You shall return to them, if you please."

Albert Denyn took a step or two forward to the spot where the prévôt stood, close to the old priest and his niece, with his hand still grasping his nephew by the shoulder. It was to the latter, however, that Marcel first spoke ; "Get ye gone, Jean," he said, pushing the young man back, "get ye gone to my house, and there wait as if you were a prisoner. I will not be long, and you shall remember this day's fine deeds. There, make your way through the crowd, and begone !"

"And you, old man," he continued, turning to the priest, "hie thee hence out of Paris as fast as may be, and take thy pretty mischief with thee : we have causes of contention enough among us already. I know what thou wouldst say, but thou shalt have safe guard and conveyance. Here, Guettry, take four strong men with you ; find quick a litter or a horse for this girl ; conduct her and her uncle safely for ten leagues upon their road ere noon to-morrow. You answer for them with your life."

The man to whom he spoke was an old weather-beaten soldier, whose habit was ever to obey without any comment ; and merely nodding his head, and saying, "Well, sir, well !" he took the priest by the arm, and drew him and his niece across the little space which had been cleared round the prévôt, towards the side next the river.

"Now, what would you with me ?" demanded Albert Denyn : "these men, I tell you, prévôt, were aiding me to rescue that poor girl, to whom you yourself promised protection and assistance. I now require you to give them an opportunity of going free, if they have done no

other wrong than defeating the weak and helpless against your vicious rabble of Paris."

"And what would be the consequences if I made the attempt?" asked the prévôt, leaning down his head and speaking low. "They would be torn to pieces, and so should I myself. No, no, that will never do. Go tell them in a whisper," he continued, in the same undertone, "go tell them in a whisper, that there is but one way to save them. If they resist, they are lost. Let them seem to submit to my will, go whither I would have them, and as I would have them, and I pledge my salvation that they shall be out of Paris to-morrow."

"How is that?" demanded Albert; but the prévôt made an impatient gesture with his hand, exclaiming, "Go! go quick! there is no time to spare!"

A fresh cry of "Down with the English! Down with the adventurers!" confirmed the words of Marcel; and Albert, returning to the side of Griffith, who stood contemplating the menacing looks of the prévôt's followers, and the crowd that was seen behind them, with an air of very great indifference, he spoke with the leader of the free companions for a moment in a low voice. Ere Griffith could answer, however, the soldiers of the prévôt began to press closer round; and, in a moment after, a general rush was made upon the little group in the centre of the circle. One of the assailants went down in an instant by a blow from the hand of Griffith! A second was struck to the earth a little to the left. But, ere another stroke could be given, the adventurers and Albert Denyn himself were seized by the hands of the crowd, and most likely would have fared ill, had it not been for the prompt and vigorous interference of Marcel and two or three of his officers, who thought fit on this occasion to follow his lead.

"Do not hurt them, do not hurt them," shouted the prévôt, loudly. "Bring them along to the Tour de Nesle: tie them if they resist. By Sainte Geneviève, I will cleave you down to the mouth, François, if you touch him with that dagger. Take that, then;" and he dashed one of his unruly followers to the ground with a blow from the back of his battle-axe, which drove his iron cap down upon his head.

"I will be obeyed," continued Marcel: "bring these men on to the Tour de Nesle. They shall be judged and dealt with according to law; but we will have no

more murder in the streets. Come, away with them, away with them! and to-morrow they shall have sentence."

"Long live the prévôt! Long live Stephen Marcel!" cried one of the men in the crowd. The rest took it up; and, amid a number of incongruous shouts and exclamations, Albert Denyn, Griffith, and the rest were hurried on, with no very great ceremony or tenderness, towards an old tower, which stood by the side of the river at the end of the town. As they came near the building, a number of the people ran on before, to call out the keepers of the prison in order to receive the captives. Marcel himself, who had remounted his horse, was also a little in advance; and, as Albert Denyn was hurried past through the low-browed arch of the Tour de Nesle, he saw the prévôt speaking eagerly to a broad, square-built, heavy-looking man, with a knot of immense keys in his hand.

In the mean time the prisoners were driven forward; and it so happened that the young follower of the Capital de Buch, being the last in the line, was in the very doorway of a large, dull-looking room on the left of the gate into which they had thrust his companions, when the person he had seen speaking to the prévôt pushed his way hastily through the soldiery and caught him by the arm, exclaiming, "Not in there, not in there, there are too many there already. Here, Pierre le Nain! take two of them up-stairs; I will put this one in the prison behind!"

Albert Denyn saw little more, for he was dragged forward; and, ere he well knew which way they were taking him, he was thrust into a small narrow chamber at the back of the building, the door of which was instantly closed and locked upon him.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

UNDER the shadow of one of those deep old woods, whereof we have more than once had occasion to speak—which at that time covered nearly one third of the whole soil of France, and of which vestiges are still to

be met with in almost every part of that fair land—in the dark hours of the night of the bright month of May, sat a group of men round a large watch-fire, whose lurid glare was the fittest light for the deeds of those on whose faces it shone. Gleaming through the bolls of the trees flashed the flame of many more; and those who gazed upon that part of the forest from a height, might well have thought that some ruthless hand was endeavouring to consume it all.

At the spot which we have mentioned were collected some ten or twelve persons, as different from each other in mind, character, and purposes, as it is possible to conceive. There was the hardy, honest peasant of a superior class, who, roused up by intolerable wrongs, had joined the Jacquerie, and had been led on, step by step, to deeds of blood and horror, which his soul abhorred. Close by him sat the *rudé*, relentless ruffian, whose sole object was blood and lust, and who, after being long kept down by the hand of power, now revelled even unto drunkenness in the anarchies of the times. There, too, appeared the daring freebooter, who had long lived upon plunder, and who, finding the Jacquerie a more profitable means of pursuing the same trade, had joined the revolted peasants with many of his band. There, too, was the dull, but remorseless Jacques Morne; there, Thibalt la Rue; and there, William Caillet, still maintaining that superiority over all around, which from the first had been the meed of higher intellect and greater energies.

It was strange to see these men, some of whom had been very lately not even clothed in the garb of peasants, but covered with rags or skins, now robed in silk and rich cloth, or cased with splendid armour, and decorated with chains of gold. The whole wealth of a province was theirs; for the first wild attack upon Plessy had not only encouraged their friends, and at once roused the whole peasantry throughout the land, but had, by its success, struck terror into their enemies, and caused a general consternation wherever the report was heard. Knights and nobles had fled before them; castle after castle had been taken by storm; small towns even had been captured and plundered; and still the cry went forth from many thousands of men-at-arms, "War to the castle and the palace! Death to the noble and the rich!"

Scenes of horror which no pen can describe, acts of barbarity that no imagination can scarcely conceive, not

only initiated the peasant into the new trade of the Jacquerie, but bound him to his bloody calling by the irreparable ties of crime. And there they now sat, the leaders of the insurrection, each urging it forward in his own peculiar way, and all contributing by their various passions to its destructive character and extraordinary success.

Among them all, with their furred gowns, and their scarlet robes, and their rich embroidery, William Caillet appeared in a garb chosen with that peculiar and careful adaptation of means to an end which so strongly characterized his mind, and blended in such an extraordinary manner with the fierce passions of which he was the slave. No gold, no jewels, no sparkling ornaments appeared upon his person. He was clad in armour of the finest kind, and over all he wore a surcoat of unmingled black. His helmet lay beside him, even when he slept, and the only decoration which it displayed was a tall black plume, which, together with his commanding height, he knew would make him an object easy to be distinguished among the peasantry whom he had excited to revolt.

It was not, however, to produce an effect upon the enemy that he assumed this peculiarity of dress; he thought more of the people who surrounded him, and of the danger of losing his influence and command over them. It was thus an impression upon their minds that he sought to effect, and for that purpose he chose his garb with care. Every serf who pillaged a nobleman's wardrobe he knew would appear in tinsel and glitter; but those plain dark arms, the black plume and coat, had not only something mysterious and solemn in their aspect, but something that harmonized with the character of his own feelings, and especially accorded with the stern, determined severity, the immovable, unrelenting determination which he found no difficulty in displaying.

He had become frugal of his speech since his first success; he conversed but little with any one, and made confidants of none but those whom he was forced to trust. From time to time, indeed, when anything induced him to suspect that the zeal of his followers began to slacken; that some apprehension of the result produced a momentary hesitation; when he saw them divided in councils, or seeking some petty object to the neglect of a greater one, then his wonted eloquence

would burst forth in words of fire, and lead all hearts away. The consequence of this conduct was, that the whole body looked up to him with reverence, not unmixed with fear. Even those, strange as it may seem, who had cast behind them every human apprehension, every holy respect, regarded him with some degree of awe, and obeyed him when he thought fit to command, without a word of opposition or a thought of resistance.

There was but one person who approached him with no such feelings, and that was old Thibault la Rue. His was a nature totally without deference for anything. He was one of those who were very rare in that age, an utter unbeliever in all that others hold sacred; he wanted, in short, the faculty of reverence; and the very existence of a God he did not give credit to, because he could not comprehend the nature of any being worthy of veneration and respect. He believed not in human virtue, except such animal qualities as the human creature shares with the brute; and, perhaps, if he had inquired strictly into his own heart, he would have found that he only admitted that man might be brave, and woman tender, without conceiving that the one could be honest, or the other chaste; and yet such are the strange contradictions in our nature, that this unbelieving frame of mind did not exclude superstition. The fact was, he could fear, though he could not reverence.

Not only were splendid dresses around that fire, though upon rude limbs and unsymmetrical forms enough, but rich cheer, such as those lips had never tasted before the commencement of that year, was spread out in rude fashion for the leaders of the revolt. Fine trout from the stream and carp from the tank; game of such kind as was then in season; and even the baronial peacock, with his spreading tail, was there, rudely cooked indeed, but washed down with wine which might have pleased an emperor, the warm vintages of the luxuriant south, brought from afar for those never destined to drink it.

We may well believe that, under such circumstances, but small moderation was observed. Golden hanaps, plundered from this castle and that, passed freely round the circle; and, under the daring influence of the grape, the joke, the jest, and the ribald song passed hither and thither, while similar sounds echoed up from the other fires which had been kindled in every part of the forest,

giving the best indication, to any ears that listened, of the wild saturnalia which reigned in one of the fairest provinces of France.

There were only two of the persons present who drank moderately, and, consequently, were more silent—Caillet and Thibalt la Rue. The first scarcely uttered a word to any one, passed the cup often untouched, and gazed, with his large, flashing eyes, full upon the blazing pile before him, as if giving it back, fire for fire. Thibalt la Rue, on his part, spoke somewhat more; glanced round the scene about him with keen, small, serpent-like eyes, and ever and anon, as he marked the traces of coming drunkenness in the vacant look and dropping mouths of his companions, a withering smile of ineffable scorn, and, as it were, of hatred for the whole human race, glanced over his lip, and passed away in an instant. His words, though sweet in tone, and accompanied with a bland expression, were generally venomously bitter, searching out, with terrible sagacity, the tender point in every one to whom he spoke, and plunging in a dagger where it was least expected.

To Caillet, indeed, that night his language was peculiarly gentle. There was a honeyed smoothness about it, which did more to put the keen leader of the insurrection upon his guard than if he had openly avowed the most hostile purposes. In one respect, Caillet had mistaken the character of Thibalt la Rue: he knew well his passion for gold, and had, in their late successes, pampered it to the utmost; but he had fancied that passion to be the only one. He believed that in him, as so often happens in the world, avarice had swallowed up every other feeling.

In this, however, he erred: the love of power was strong in the heart of the old man: he cared not, indeed, whether he ruled openly or by another; but still he was well pleased to rule; to exercise his cunning and his skill in guiding, directing, commanding; and he could not bear to see even Caillet himself, though he knew and felt his superior genius, completely independent of his sway, by the influence he had gained over his fellow-insurgents. He had resolved, then, long before this period, that such a state of things should be changed; and, as his whole spirit was intrigue, he took no small delight in working for his own ends.

Let it not be supposed, indeed, that his design was to

overthrow Caillet, for he saw too clearly that such an event as that man's fall must prove the destruction of all around. But he sought to gain such power over Caillet himself, as, through him, to govern the whole. Circumstances, as we shall soon see, had, up to this point, wonderfully favoured his schemes; but this was one of those critical instances in which there was likely to be a struggle, and it was his object to turn Caillet in one direction, while he himself acted in another, in order to possess himself of an advantage which he felt sure would enable him to rule the leader at his will.

He had prepared all for his purpose before he sat down beside that fire; and by subtle insinuations to several of the persons present, he had prompted that proposal which was certain to lead the forces of the insurgents in the direction that he desired, if Caillet still remained ignorant of facts with which he himself had accidentally become acquainted. He had so schemed, also, that if Caillet resisted, he was likely to meet with opposition for the first time, and perhaps to have his determination overruled by the voices of all the leaders present.

The proposal of which we have spoken had been delayed, and the feast and the revel protracted somewhat longer than the old man liked; and at length, looking towards the captain of the freebooters we have mentioned, a man of great corporeal powers and no slight talents, he said aloud, after an unnoticed sign for the other to begin, "Well, my friends, we had better settle our proceedings for to-morrow, before we are all quite drunk."

Caillet remained silent; and the freebooter then, remembering the suggestions that had been made to him by Thibalt, exclaimed, "Of course we shall now go to Senlis, as we proposed last week. There is nothing to stop us now; the town is open and full of wealth; we shall get immense booty, and destroy a whole nest of the viper nobility."

Caillet gazed at him as he spoke with a stern smile; but, before he could answer, several of the others round exclaimed, "Oh, yes, to Senlis—to Senlis let us go; we shall never get such plunder as that."

The leader frowned, and replied sternly, "We go first to Ermenonville! That castle taken, I lead you to Senlis; but we must not leave it behind us, with its garrison ready to attack us in the rear."

"Send old Thibalt with ten thousand men to blockade it," cried the freebooter, who had been well tutored: "there are not fifty men in the place; but, before we have captured it, the dauphin's troops may be in Senlis, and we lose the best thing that has offered itself since the beginning."

Thibalt cast a rapid glance towards Caillet to see how he relished the proposal; but the latter replied, fixing his eyes sternly upon the freebooter, "I do not change my purposes! What I have said is determined. We take Ermenonville, and then attack Senlis; and, should the dauphin's troops be in it, if there be no cowards among ourselves, we will burn them and Senlis together."

"Nay," cried the freebooter, boldly, while several voices murmured something about proceeding to Senlis at once, "I see not why one man's voice should overthrow all our counsels. Let us put it to the vote here whether we shall go first to Senlis or Ermenonville. You are a brave, strong man, William Caillet, and a good leader to boot; but not a bit braver, or stronger, or wiser than I or any one else here present."

"If I am not," answered Caillet, rising coldly and slowly from the ground, "I am not fit to overrule your opinion, which I will do or die. We will have no disputes or factions among us. There is one way, when any two leaders differ, of settling the matter at once, without sending the quarrel throughout the whole. Stand up, man, I say! stand up and draw your sword! No words, my friends, but make a space around. He has said that I am not braver, or stronger, or wiser than he is; I say that I am all! Now let him try. Stand back, I say; those that know me will not meddle. Are you a coward?" he added, seeing that the freebooter hesitated.

His opponent's weapon instantly flashed in the air, and was aimed at Caillet's naked head with a sudden straightforward stroke, which seemed destined to cleave him to the ground; but it was parried in a moment; and, ere he could recover his guard, the sweeping blade of the insurgent leader struck him on the neck beneath the left ear, and laid him a headless trunk upon the earth, as if he had been smitten with a scythe. The dark blood spouted forth and deluged the grass; and Caillet, wiping his blade upon a handful of leaves, replaced it in the sheath, saying, "A body of our men are already before

Ermenonville; we will take it ere two suns have risen and set, and then I promise I will lead to Senlis."

"When you have possessed yourself of fair Adela de Mauvinet," added Thibalt la Rue, with a sweet smile and in a low tone; "but what is to be done with this piece of flesh that lies quivering here? I fear it will be difficult to fit the head upon the body again; and if those he brought with him see them thus disjoined, they may very likely quit us or breed a tumult."

"If they seek to quit us, let them go," replied Caillet; "we can well spare them. If they breed a tumult, there are plenty of trees to hang them to; nor will ropes be wanting, nor hands willing to do it. As for the rest, let his body be taken away and buried. The matter is sufficient as it is to serve for a good warning, my friend Thibalt, both for those who listen to evil counsels, and to those who give them."

It was early on the following morning when the immense multitude of the insurgents surrounded the castle of Ermenonville; and, though the place was strong and well-defended, yet before night terrible progress had been made towards its destruction. The walls were undermined in various places, and two or three more hours of light would have seen many a yawning breach in the defences.

Just about the time the sun was setting, old Thibalt la Rue was seen speaking eagerly with four of the peasants, who had been carrying forward the attack on the side where he himself commanded.

"But I tell you," he said, in answer to some objection which one of them had seemed to make, "but I tell you that, as soon as he has got possession of this girl, he will have all that he has ever desired, and then he will marry her, get a promise of pardon, and distinction for himself, quit us, and leave us to our fate; nay, perhaps, be the first to head the troops against us. No, no, we must enable her to make her escape, or else get hold of her ourselves, which would be better still; for then we could rule him as we liked."

"But how can we do it, how can we do it?" asked the peasant to whom he was speaking. "The old lord is too cunning to believe anything you can write to him."

"I don't know that," replied Thibalt; "and, besides, there are four or five of the men from St. Leu who were the old lord's villeins, and they go to this business with

an unwilling heart, for they love him much. If you will consent and help me, I will speak with them as soon as the sun is down. We can get them, I dare say, to be hostages."

"But how can we get hold of the girl, then?" demanded the peasant to whom he spoke.

"By a sudden attack laid in ambush," replied Thibalt. "You shall command it, and can easily hide two or three hundred men in the brushwood on the skirts of the forest. It will all be easily managed: make his own people persuade the old lord to try an escape during the night, they becoming pledges for his safety. Do not set upon him till he is beyond our farthest posts: by that time the hostages will be free; so that if these men of Mauvinet require any sureties themselves, I can give myself up for one, and be at liberty before you make your attack. But mind, on your life and honour, you do no harm to the girl, otherwise we lose our hold upon Caillet."

"I will take care of that," replied the other, "I will take care of that; but now, Master Thibalt, if I bring her safe to you, you shall ransom her from me, for it is for you that I am working, that is clear enough."

"I will give you a hundred pieces of gold," said Thibalt.

"If you do not make it five hundred," replied the man, "I will take her up to Caillet, or keep her myself to be my own paramour."

Even villains find a state of society in which all principle is at an end very inconvenient to live in; and old Thibalt himself, who had never conceived any moral tie as binding, now longed for some such bond, wherewith to secure his own instruments. He was obliged, however, to deal with things as he found them; and after settling the affair, as far as possible, with those to whom he had first communicated his views, he prowled about till the sun was down, and then gathered together five or six of the men of Mauvinet, with whom he held a long and eager conversation. At length he procured a light and a piece of parchment, and sending for a cunning scribe, over whom he had gained some power, he caused him to write hastily the following lines:

"Lord of Mauvinet,

"These are written to you by a friend. The castle of Ermenonville is untenable and cannot be held out.

If you are the man that we believe, you are already thinking of cutting your way through, and selling your life dearly. However, as you were always a kind lord and a good master, your friends in the camp of the free people of France have determined to give you an opportunity of escaping, if you choose to take advantage of it. In the quarter opposite to the western postern you will find a path open for you; and you may rest perfectly certain that you will be safe for the distance of two miles. But to render you more secure, as you may well entertain a doubt of the word pledged to you, you will find three hostages, unarmed, within five yards of the door. Them you will take with you for a mile on your way, and then set them free. But, as you value your own life, and the lives of those who risk all to save you, you must be as still as death while you and yours go through the midst of the camp. Not a word must be spoken, and you must pass along slowly, lest the noise of your horses or the jingling of your harness should rouse others than those who seek your good. The hour is midnight."

As soon as this was written, it was tied to the head of an arrow, round the shaft of which was wrapped some tow. That material was then lighted, and the whole was shot into the castle. For several hours after, the ordinary scenes took place among the insurgents, but gradually about ten o'clock all noises ceased, and weariness laid the strong limbs at rest. Little guard or watch of any kind was kept among them; for their numbers were so immense that they imagined they had no cause for fear. To all appearance, the only persons that were awake among the whole multitude were William Caillet and Thibalt la Rue, who sat close together, talking eagerly in their usual strain. The old man seemed anxious, rather than otherwise, to keep his companion's eyes from sleeping, laying out schemes and plans for the future, and inquiring into the tidings which Caillet had received from various parts of France.

At length, however, Caillet exclaimed, "Get you gone, Thibalt, get you gone? I must sleep! For three nights I have not closed my eyes; but now I have them in my grasp. Nothing can snatch them from me now, and I may well have a few hours' slumber."

Old Thibalt suppressed the bitter smile that was rising to his lip, and merely adding, in a taunting tone, "I

thought you never slept, Caillet," he left him, returning to his own part of their leaguer, where he instantly sought out the men he had been conversing with at night-fall.

"I am come, you see," he said, "to place myself in your hands. Where are the three men who are to be hostages?"

"They are gone forward already," replied one of the peasants. "Let us draw back, Master Thibalt, into this hollow, and watch what follows."

Thibalt accompanied them in silence; and then, seating themselves in a little cavity of the ground, the party gazed eagerly for some minutes over the slope towards the castle. The night was very dark, and though one could see the sombre masses of towers and walls, marked by a deeper blackness upon the sky behind, nothing else was visible. All was silent; but after a time the keen ears of the old man caught a sound, and, raising himself upon his knees, he soon saw a number of dark objects, which might be men and horses, moving slowly and silently forward. They passed on with a low rustling, and were soon lost to his sight. Thibalt and his companions listened eagerly for several minutes; but at length, as all remained still, he turned and said, "You see I have dealt fairly with you."

In less than half an hour, the three men, who had been given as hostages, came back, and Thibalt, without waiting to hear their account of what had taken place, exclaimed, "All is now safe, so I will retire to rest!" and he hurried away to a hut in which he had taken up his abode.

It was situated near the edge of the camp, and the old man was some time in reaching it; but soon, when he had entered and closed the door, far from seeking repose, he listened, with his head inclined and his ear turned to the window, till, suddenly, he heard a distant sound of shouts and clashing of arms, as of men in strife. Others heard it also, and rushed forth: the whole camp was soon roused, and everything was noise and confusion. But, in the midst of all, the leader of the peasants, whom he had cunningly placed in ambush, was brought into his hut, wounded and bleeding.

"Curse upon them and you!" he exclaimed as soon as he saw Thibalt. "They have escaped, and half killed me."

The old man tried to give him consolation; but the dying Jacques rolled his eyes wildly round, saying to one of his companions, who had helped him thither, "Fetch me Caillet. I would fain speak to William Caillet."

"Go, go!" cried Thibalt, in a sweet tone, "fetch him Caillet, as he wants to speak to him."

The man retired, leaving his comrade alone with the old serpent who had employed him; and in less than ten minutes Caillet was in the hut.

"Alas! you are too late," said Thibalt, as he saw him, "the poor fellow is dead. They have broken through, Caillet, you have heard, and killed poor Mer-lache, here. What he had to say I know not, but he wanted much to speak with you."

Caillet uttered not a word, but turned upon his heel.

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#### CHAPTER XIV.

THE only article of furniture that was to be found in the prison to which Albert Denyn had been consigned was a small three-legged stool. And, as the young soldier looked round at the bare walls, the small grated window some two or three feet above his head, the damp earthen floor, and the strong iron-plated door covered with dull and dropping mould, he could not but feel a sort of heavy and cheerless cloud come over his brighter hopes, and make the prospect before him look more dark and gloomy than it really was. A moment after, however, the buoyant heart of youth rose up again, and he murmured to himself, with a smile, "This is certainly a strange turn of fate!"

He had still to undergo that which is more difficult to endure, without despondency, than any sudden misfortune or disappointment, namely, the weary passing of hours in solitude and idleness. At first, he consoled himself with the thought that the *prévôt* would certainly not fail to keep his promise, and set himself and the rest of the prisoners at liberty as soon as he could do so without danger. The King of Navarre, he fancied, also, out of respect for the *Capit de Buch*, would not suffer his imprisonment to be long.

Nevertheless, as hour after hour went by, and not a soul entered the prison, either to bring him provisions or exchange a word with him, his spirits sank, and he felt a degree of melancholy creep over him, of which he was ashamed, and with which he struggled, without being able to overcome it.

The light which the chamber possessed was but little, even in the brightest part of the day; but now that light began to decrease, and at length the young soldier saw the last ray fade away, and all was darkness. He continued to walk up and down the room, however, giving way to all the sad thoughts which were naturally suggested, not only by his own situation, but by the state of France, and the dangers which surrounded those who were most dear to him. The wing of time flew on, with nothing to relieve the monotony of its passing, except the sounds which he heard, occasionally, proceeding either from other parts of the prison, or from the busy world without, the tie between him and which seemed now to his eyes entirely dissevered.

During the early part of the night the sound of tongues reached him, talking loudly in some of the neighbouring chambers; and once he heard a gay voice singing in the English tongue; showing that either the other prisoners did not share his despondency, or else that they were better provided with means of lightening the load of imprisonment. Then, again, the plashing sound of oars, and the rushing of a boat through the water immediately beneath the tower, struck his ear, and gay tongues and a merry laugh from a distance—probably from the other side of the river—served more to increase his melancholy, by contrasting harshly with his own feelings, than to enliven him, by showing that there was still joy and cheerfulness in the world. As time went on, however, all these sounds ceased, and silence took up her dominion over the gay metropolis of France.

To the best of Albert Denyn's judgment, midnight was past by more than one hour, when he again heard the noise of oars, and a boat seemed to stop beneath the walls of the tower itself. The moment after, three sharp blows, as if struck by some heavy substance, against a wooden door, reached the ear of the young prisoner; and, after an interval of silence, which lasted, perhaps, four or five minutes, the blows were repeated, and a voice exclaimed,

"Mathew, Mathew! open and let me in!" For a short time no other sound was heard; but then a heavy foot sounded upon the stairs, the great gate creaked upon its hinges, and the murmur of two persons speaking low made itself faintly heard through the door of his prison. An instant after that door itself opened, and a bright light flashed in, dazzling Albert Denyn's eyes, so that he could not, at first, see who it was that approached. It was the voice of the *Prévôt* Marcel, however, that exclaimed, as he turned sharply to the keeper of the tower, who was behind him, "How is this, Mathew? You have left him without bed, or light, or food, apparently!"

"You never told me to give him either," replied the jailer: "you said to keep him alone—"

"But not starve him," cried the *prévôt*. "However, quick, bring him some food and wine. They have treated you ill, my young friend, but I have not forgotten my promise."

Certainly, five minutes before, Albert Denyn would have thought a jest the most unpalatable thing in the world. But so speedy are the revolutions of feeling in the human heart, that apprehension and despondency vanish at once, and he replied gayly, "You invited me to supper, *monsieur le prévôt*—I must say you have given me dainty fare."

"Knights errant," answered the *prévôt*, with a grim smile, "have always been known to feed poorly and sleep on hard beds; and such will ever be the case, my good sir, with those who meddle in affairs with which they have nothing to do."

"But," exclaimed Albert Denyn, "you would not have me stand tamely by, and she—"

"Well, well," exclaimed the *prévôt*, interrupting him, "we have no time to talk of these things now. Besides, the matter is settled, and there is never any use of returning to a business that is gone. Let the past have its own! From its sad and dark dominion we can never recover one of all the things that have bowed to its sway, be they the bright and beautiful; be they the stern and terrible; be they good, be they bad. The past is the only monarch against whose sway there is no appeal, and from whose dread sceptre there is no escaping. The old man and his niece are safe, far beyond the walls of Paris. Your friends here, in the prison

with you, shall be set at liberty before to-morrow morning. But it is with you that I have to speak, and with the present that we have to deal. You are a Frenchman, are you not?"

"A true one," answered Albert Denyn.

"Then, how come you to be serving with the Capital de Buch?" demanded the prévôt.

"I have only served with him in foreign lands," replied Albert; "but never against my native country. For it I will always draw my sword, and never against it; and that the noble capital knows right well."

"Good, good," said the prévôt; and, after thinking for a moment, he added, "I have a task for you, which you must not refuse."

"Tell me now of it, prévôt," rejoined Albert. "I have learned many a lesson of late, and, among the rest, know, that one ought to undertake nothing without comprehending clearly what it is and what it leads to."

"You are right to be cautious," said the prévôt; "but it is a task that you may well be proud to perform."

He paused and mused for several minutes, and then, while the jailer brought in a small table and some food, he spoke of indifferent subjects, or else gazed heavily upon the ground. As soon as the man was gone, however, he continued saying, "Fall to and refresh yourself; but keep your ears open. There is a young lady now in this town of Paris—would to God that she had not come hither!—of high rank and station, but of a race who are safer anywhere else than in the French capital. You have heard of the taking of the tower of the Louvre, where we found such a supply of arms and ammunition: she was known to be therein, and the mob sought for her, somewhat eager for bloodshed. I found means to save her from their fury, for the time; for, though no way tender-hearted, I love not to see a woman's blood spilled; and, besides, it is always well to leave some door open for retreat in case of need. I concealed her then; but these people, these Parisians, the most turbulent and ungovernable race on the face of the earth, know that she is still in the capital, suspect me, and watch every movement that I make. She must be got out of Paris before daybreak to-morrow. I dare send none of my own people with her to give her protection, and I know no one to apply to but you."

Albert Denyn listened eagerly, and imagination whis-

pered instantly in his ear the name of Adela de Mauvinet. There was no cause, it is true, why he should suppose the prévôt spoke of her. He had merely mentioned a lady of high rank, and there was not any reason whatsoever for believing that Adela was in Paris; yet a feeling of hope and expectation rose in the breast of the young soldier, which made his heart beat high as he listened. Did you never remark in the midst of some wide and extended plain, while the clouds of an April day are passing over, sweeping forest and field, village and stream, with their blue shadows as they fly, one bright particular spot—some church spire or cottage window—on which the light rests longer, and catches more frequently, than on any other point in the whole scene, a spot which seems to draw to itself every stray sunbeam that visits the landscape and which shines out the moment that a ray finds its way through the cloud? Such is the object of its love to a young heart. The moment that the light of hope breaks through the darkness of despondency and the clouds of care, the first rays fall naturally upon the predominant object of the heart's affections, making it sparkle with contrasted splendour from the gloom of the scene around.

Without an instant's hesitation Albert Denyn accepted the task, only remarking, "It is unfortunate that you can give me no one to accompany me; a single hand can do but little in times like these."

"I have no one, I have no one," said the prévôt, impatiently. "If I contrive to get her safe from Paris, it will be no slight thing. Your task must be to bring her in safety to Ermenonville or Beaumont."

"Could I not have some of the English with me?" demanded Albert Denyn. "There are several of them I have seen before, and one named Scroope, who stood strongly by me when they had taken me prisoner, and were about putting me to death."

"I dare not trust them," replied the prévôt, "I dare not trust them; they are all rank marauders; and if they were to discover the prize they have in their hands, they would cut your throat for the mere ransom, if they could not get you to join and share with them. Yet stay! this fellow Scroope, you may take him with you: man to man, you will be his match, doubtless, and he must promise to be under your command. Wait a moment or two, and finish your supper; I will go and speak with him."

The prévôt quitted the chamber, and Albert Denyn was left for about a quarter of an hour in solitude. At the end of that time, however, Marcel returned with the soldier Scroope, who laughed when he saw the young soldier, saying good-humouredly, "So I am to be under your command, though I have seen more battles than you have seen years. However, I'd be under the command of a baby of six months old, in order to get out of the hole into which they have crammed me, giving me nothing but sour wine and hog's-flesh. But tell me, how came you by this fine coat of arms? When last I saw you, there was something not quite so gay about you."

"That is nothing to you, my good friend," replied Albert Denyn: "be you sure that the arms are my own, as well as that medal of the emperor, at which you are looking. He put it round my neck with his own hand," the youth added, proudly. "But let us not waste time. I am ready, Sir Prévôt."

"Not till I have finished this flagon," cried Scroope; "if you do not drink it, I see no reason why I should not."

The rest of their proceedings in the prison were soon brought to an end. Marcel led the way out, and, descending the little sloping path which led to the bank of the river, they found a boat with a solitary boatman, who rose as he perceived the prévôt.

"Quick, Mathurin," said the prévôt, speaking to the person in the skiff; "you I can trust. Run back with this key: bring out another horse, a *destrier*, to the place where I sent the boy with the others. If they seek to stop you at the gate, show them your badge: we will row ourselves to the place."

The man sprang to the shore; Albert Denyn, the prévôt, and Scroope entered the boat, and the Englishman, seizing the oars of his own free will, rowed rapidly on, under the direction of Marcel, to a spot on the other bank of the river.

As near as possible, at the point where the houses of the village of Passy approach the river in the present day, but which then formed part of a green field, bordered by a vineyard and embellished with several groups of tall trees, appeared in the clear moonlight a dark mass standing under one of the elms. It might have been composed of bushes for aught that the eye could really discern, but the imagination of Albert Denyn in-

stantly aided him to arrange it as a group of men and horses. In this instance, imagination was right to a certain degree: the horses were there; one tied to the tree itself, and another held by a page covered with a large riding-mantle. No other human beings, however, were there; and Albert Denyn, who sprang to the ground before the prévôt, looked round in vain for the lady.

Marcel spoke a few words to the page in a low voice, and, speedily after, was heard the sound of another horse's feet coming rapidly. The noise was soon found to proceed, however, from the approach of the man named Mathurin, leading a charger provided with a strong steel saddle and headpiece.

"Now mount quick," said the prévôt; "and God speed you."

"But where is the lady?" demanded Albert Denyn.

"You will find her by the way," replied the prévôt.

"I am to ride her horse and meet the lady till you do," cried the page, springing upon the light jennet which he had hitherto held; "I can show you the road if you do not know it."

"Oh, we all know the way right well," replied the man named Scroope; "you saucy pages think that no one is acquainted with anything but yourselves."

Thus saying, he mounted the beast provided for him; and, taking leave of Marcel, with one or two words of instruction from the prévôt, as to what places they were to avoid and what places to seek, the little party set out upon its journey.

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## CHAPTER XV.

ALBERT DENYN, the page, and the stout yeoman, Scroope, rode on for about an hour almost in silence; the two former were certainly occupied in thoughts of their own; the latter was troubled with very few thoughts of any kind; but, unlike some persons, whose mind is lightly loaded, his tongue was not the more active on that account. He was the perfect soldier of that day, though a favourable specimen of the animal; for his heart was good, his judgment not bad; and when called upon

to act, he did so in a manner very creditable to himself; but, until the moment for action came, he went on, without the slightest inquiry regarding what was to happen next, and in utter carelessness of everything that was taking place around him. He was exactly one of those, so well depicted by Dryden, who whistle as they go, for want of thought; and, indeed, in the present instance, he practised the same musical idleness, whistling a light air, till Albert put him in mind that he might call attention to their party, which was not at all to be desired.

During the hour that we have mentioned, the thoughts of Albert Denyn were stirred up by expectation, and he looked anxiously forward every moment, in the hope of seeing the person whom he was destined to escort. At the end of that time, however, the moon touched the edge of the sky; and, although morning was near, the sun yet gave no light. There seemed every chance of passing her in the darkness, and Albert Denyn could refrain no longer, but, turning to the page, he said, "Surely we cannot have missed the lady."

"Do not fear, do not fear," replied the boy, laughing. "All will go right, I dare say."

"But I do not choose to trust to dare says," rejoined the young soldier, not particularly well pleased with the tone of the boy's answer. "Have you good reason to think that we are on the track to find her? The prévôt told me that it would be with the greatest difficulty that he got her out of Paris; and if he brought her as far as this, he might send her with equal safety to Beaumont."

"Doubtless," said the boy, in the same tone; "but she may be nearer to us than we think: do you not understand yet, young man?"

"Perhaps I do," replied Albert Denyn; but at the same time his expectations grew cold, for the voice that spoke to him was certainly not that of Adela de Mauvinet.

The party relapsed into silence again; and in about half an hour after the eastern sky grew gray and then yellow, and twilight and light succeeded to darkness. Albert Denyn turned a near glance upon the countenance of his young companion, and he saw, beneath the page's hood, the soft features and fair skin of a very beautiful girl, of about two or three and twenty years of age, but that girl was not Adela de Mauvinet. Tenderness and courtesy towards woman, however, was a part

of the young soldier's code; and, after riding on by the lady's side for some way, he said, "Are you not likely to be much fatigued?"

"Oh no," she replied; "I have been used lately to a harder life than I ever thought to know. But, at all events, it were better to die of weariness than to be torn to pieces by yon mad mob of Paris."

"But what can you have done," demanded Albert Denyn, "to offend the people? I thought that the good Parisians were softened in a moment by youth and beauty."

"You have heard the same story," replied the lady, "in regard to the effect produced by an innocent maiden upon a lion. I should not like to be the virgin to try, however, much less to trust the tiger of Paris—I mean the mob of the capital—with no other arms than youth, beauty, or innocence either. Why, without shame or remorse, they would cut off Diana's ears, or hang up Venus to the first water-spout they could find."

She spoke laughing, but with some degree of bitterness, and such as the specimen we have given was her conversation as they proceeded. In despite of all that she had gone through, she was still light, gay, and somewhat coquettish withal: by no means without a due sense of her own beauty and her own wit, and of the united effect which both ought to have upon her companions. It is not to be denied that, as he rode on, hour after hour, by the side of this fair being, Albert Denyn felt no slight degree of interest and admiration. But still she was not to him, nor ever could be, Adela de Mauvinet.

We must not pause upon all the little adventures that took place by the way, or all the little acts of kindness and attention which Albert paid to his fair charge; nor must we detail how she certainly tried to pique his admiration to the highest point, and felt somewhat pettish and disappointed on finding that, though full of chivalrous courtesy and attention, there was none of that fiery and eager admiration which is in general so easily excited in the breast of the young.

All passed in safety; here and there, indeed, the travellers heard of parties of brigands, and, as they proceeded farther from Paris, sad tales of the ravages of the Jacquerie met their ears; but no body, either of the adventurers or of the insurgent peasants, presented itself;

and although Albert, from what he had previously heard, was too well aware that the revolt was of the most serious character, the lady continued to make light of it, and still to declare that all the Jacques in the world could not be so bad as the citizens of Paris. Even her tone, however, was changed, when, pausing at a small village where they proposed to pass the night, she saw the smoking ruins of a tall castle on the neighbouring hill, and heard that it had been burned to the ground three days before by the peasantry of Brie.

A hurried consultation was held on the following morning early between herself and Albert Denyn, for it can hardly be said that Scroope took any part therein, being ready to follow wherever any one else preceded him, but neither willing, nor, indeed, able to lead. The first point to be considered was, in what direction their steps should be turned; for some rumours had reached them, during the preceding evening, of a large body of Jacques barring the way towards Ermenonville; but the lady pressed eagerly that they should, at least, make the attempt in that quarter. "I have faithful friends," she said, "in the castle; and if I could once reach them, I should feel safe."

"We will try," replied Albert Denyn, "we will try. But, if we find ourselves shut out from Ermenonville, it is to Beaumont, is it not, that we must direct our steps?"

The lady assented, and they rode on with the first beams of the day in the direction which had been pointed out.

They had proceeded about six miles when, towards seven o'clock in the morning, the sun, still low down in the sky, appeared to pour all his rays upon one spot at the distance of about a mile from them, as they passed across the brow of a hill looking over the country, far and wide around. The light flashed back from that spot to the eyes of the little party, as if reflected from some bright substance; and the lady, drawing in her horse's rein, exclaimed, "What is that! what is that! Those must be armed men."

"I think it is so," replied Albert Denyn; "and, by seeing no surcoat among them, I should judge that they are the armed peasantry. Wait here with this soldier, good lady, and I will go on and ascertain."

Although his fair companion besought him eagerly to stay with her himself, and send the man Scroope for-

ward to reconnoitre, Albert Denyn would not trust that task to the trooper's somewhat duller intellects, and rode on, winding among the lanes and high banks, in order to get as near as possible, without being observed, to the party he had seen. At length, at a spot where he could just raise his head above the bank, he obtained a full view into the meadow, where some thirty or forty men-at-arms were collected, and the scene presented to his eyes was one of no slight interest. The distance was too great for him to distinguish the faces; but he was soon satisfied that the party there collected did not belong to the Jacquerie. In one place a group was gathered together, eating what seemed a hasty meal; in another, a strong man, with his corselets stripped off, was holding out his naked arm, while a woman, on her knees beside him, twined a long bandage round what seemed a severe wound.

Under some trees appeared three or four ladies and two gentlemen, with a page apparently helping them to wine; while at a little distance, under a bank, were collected the horses of the party, with a boy watching them. Satisfied with what he saw, but yet judging that it was more prudent, circumstanced as he was, to avoid all communication with strangers, Albert Denyn rode back, and met the lady, whose impatient spirit would not suffer her to remain where he left her, coming down by the road which he had followed.

"Well, what are they? what are they, ungallant squire?" she said. "If you leave ladies, intrusted to your care, in that manner, you will get no fair hands to buckle on your knightly spurs: what are these men?"

"They seem of gentle blood, lady," replied Albert, "and have women with them; but, nevertheless, I think we had better pass on our way without venturing to speak with them. They may be some of the English bands, and as bad as the Jacquerie."

"Worse, perhaps," said Scroope, bluntly: "were they to meet with a pretty lady dressed as a boy, I would not answer for any of our brave fellows not thinking her fair game."

"Hush, sir!" cried the lady, turning upon him with an air of dignity and sternness, very different from the coquettish manner which she had assumed towards Albert Denyn: "hush, sir! you do not know of whom you speak."

"By the Lord, it matters very little," replied the man, with a tone of indifference: "a good English rider would not stop to ask who or what you are, so that he found you in that dress, and in these fields. Nevertheless, do not be offended or afraid: I will do my best to befriend and protect you, as I have promised; but I think, with this good youth, we had better keep out of the way of superior numbers."

By this time they had reached the spot from which Albert Denyn had reconnoitred the party; and a little farther on, the bank sloped down still more, so that the lady herself was enabled to see over into the meadow. That little germe of curiosity which is at the bottom of every heart, both male and female, and mingles itself with more things than we think of, would not suffer her to let the opportunity pass unemployed; and, drawing in her rein, she gazed out over the field, where the party we have spoken of was by this time in the act of gathering together their equipments, and mounting their horses for the purpose of departure.

"I cannot but think," exclaimed the lady, "that those must be French arms I see yonder."

"You had better ride on, lady," said Albert Denyn: "they will see our heads above the bank, and worse may come of it."

"See, see!" said the lady, without attending to what her companion said, "see! they are raising a banner there. Whose arms are those?"

"Mauvinet! Mauvinet!" cried Albert Denyn, clasping his hands with joy: "good friends to the crown of France, lady! The seneschal of Touraine! Let us haste to meet them: they must cross by the gap we have just passed;" and, without more ado, he turned his horse and galloped back, scarcely remarking whether the lady followed him or not.

In a minute he had reached the break in the bank which led into the fields; and, spurring his charger through, he lashed forward at full speed to meet the party which was now coming slowly on, four or five abreast, with the good Lord of Mauvinet and several other gentlemen in the front, forming a guard on either side of a fair female form, the sight of which made the stout heart of Albert Denyn flutter like that of a timid girl.

On the other hand, the sudden appearance of a horseman covered with a surcoat of arms unknown to any

one present, followed at some little distance by what seemed a page and another man-at-arms, created some surprise, and, as it happened, apprehension among the party of the Lord of Mauvinet.

"Halt!" cried the count, as soon as he saw him approaching. "Who have we here? Some fresh bad tidings, I fear. Whose are those bearings on his coat? Argent a bend dexter azure: those are not French arms, I think. Why turn you so pale, my Adela? Fear not, fear not: we can defend you still, dear girl—but, surely, I know that youth—Albert Denyn, as I live. Welcome, welcome, my dear boy!" and the old nobleman held out his arms to his young retainer as if he had been a son.

Albert Denyn sprang to the ground, and eagerly kissed the good lord's hand, and then, turning a look full of emotion to the other side, he saw the sweet eyes of Adela de Mauvinet, filled with tears, bent down towards the saddle-bow, while the quivering of her lip told to him, and perhaps to others, what a struggle there was in her breast to prevent the words of joy from breaking forth.

A few moments of silence followed on all parts, and then some sentences of explanation succeeded; but, ere Albert Denyn could say one half of that which he had to tell, the eyes of the old Lord of Mauvinet had lighted on the lady in a page's habit, who was now approaching near; and, after passing his hand twice across his sight, as if to clear it from some allusion, he cast his rein to an attendant, sprang to the ground, and, advancing towards the fair rider with a lowly inclination, pressed his lips upon her hand. This act, as may be supposed, created some small bustle and surprise in his own troop, and under cover thereof Adela bent down her head to speak to the companion of her childhood, saying, first aloud, "Who is that, Albert?" and then adding, in a low voice, "Thank God! thank God, you have come back to us! Ay, and with this too," she added, laying her finger lightly for a single instant on his coat of arms. "Well won has it been, I am sure, dear Albert, and ever will be nobly borne. But who is this my father is bringing up?"

"In truth, I do not know, dear lady," replied Albert: "she is a high-bred and somewhat high-mannered lady, who was put under my charge to conduct in safety from Paris, where her life was in danger, to Ermenonville."

He had not time to say any more, when the Lord of Mauvinet, leading the lady's horse by the bridle, approached, saying, "Dismount, my Adela, and pay due reverence to the Duchess of Orleans."

The surprise of Albert Denyn was not less than that of those around him; but after the little bustle occasioned by the meeting was over, a short consultation was held; and on hearing that the duchess was wending her way towards Ermenonville, the Lord of Mauvinet shook his head mournfully, saying, "Ermenonville is but a name, madam. Two days ago we ourselves, in all but thirty fighting men, strove to hold out the place against eight thousand Jacques. Finding it in vain, we made our way through them in the night, not without some loss and some wounds, leaving behind us at Clari, on the hill, two men to watch the proceedings of the villains, and bring us tidings. From them we find that, ere the sun had risen three hours on the day we left it, not a stone was left standing of Ermenonville. We were even now bending our steps towards Beaumont on the Oyse, thinking, madam, that you were there. We know, however, that there is a strong body of men in the place, and we may well expect aid from Paris or from Montereau."

"From Montereau, perhaps," replied the duchess; "but from Paris, none. However, let us onward, my good lord, for it seems that danger lies upon the path that we were following. At Beaumont we shall find some repose, and can hold counsel farther."

As the lady spoke she took her place between the Lord of Mauvinet and his daughter, making a sign to Albert Denyn to occupy a place behind her, and saying aloud, "Follow me, my young friend; you shall still be my squire, so keep close to your lady. I owe that good youth much, my Lord of Mauvinet, though, whether, from some secret knowledge of my name and station, or because he is somewhat young in ladies' company, he has been as cold and shy as a new captain of the guard."

The Lord of Mauvinet replied something in a light tone; but Adela turned her eyes to the young soldier's countenance with a smile which seemed to say that she knew better than the gay duchess the cause of his coldness and his shyness.

The party proceeded, and, after a somewhat fatiguing march, they came in sight of the tall towers and heavy

walls of the castle of Beaumont on the Oyse, and rode gladly up the ascent in hopes of repose and safety.

One after another, the cavalcade entered through the heavy arches of the tower gate; but, ere Albert Denyn followed their example, he turned for a moment to gaze around him, and to examine the features of the country in which he was about to pause for the night, as had become habitual with him during the wandering life which he had lately led under the banner of the Captal de Buch.

The spring sun was shining over a sparkling scene, casting long shadows here and there, from wood, and village, and rising ground; so that, though the scene was fair to look upon, it was difficult for any unpractised eye to judge exactly of the various objects which the prospect might contain. At two points of the plain of Chamblly, however, Albert Denyn saw some sombre masses of considerable extent, which puzzled him not a little. They were darker than the mere shadows cast by the copses, yet they did not seem to be sufficiently raised from the surface of the country to be either woods or hamlets. Albert continued to gaze, for the purpose of seeing if they were stationary, but they neither advanced nor receded, and he then cast his eyes upon the ground, and remained musing somewhat gloomily for a moment or two. Suddenly, however, a hand was laid upon his arm, and the friendly voice of the Lord of Mauvinet said, "How now, Albert, why are you tarrying here, when there are friends within who are anxious to hear all that has happened to you? and why look you so sad, when, from all that I have heard, and all that I see, there is no man in all France should have a gladder heart than you?"

"My noble lord," replied Albert, willing to avoid the real subject of his thoughts, "I cannot think how any one in France can have a cheerful heart, and see her in such a state as she now is; but if you would know what I have been watching, look there at those two dark spots some five miles off.

"What are they?" said the Lord of Mauvinet: "your young eyes are better than mine, Albert. I do not see them move: they seem to me like the young plantations made by the last king."

"If they be young plantations, my lord," replied Albert, "there are men in them. They do not advance, it is true; but if you will look steadfastly, you will see the

edges change their shape from time to time, like the outskirts of people collected in one spot for the night."

"The Jacques, for my life, then," cried the old lord: "we must have them well watched, Albert: ay, and by some of our own people too; for I find these fellows in the castle here had thoughts of abandoning it before we came up, and I do not believe they are much to be trusted. I will set Pierrot to look out from the highest tower. But you come in with us; the duchess asks for you, and you must tell us all your adventures."

"Nay, nay, my lord," answered the youth, "my adventures are little worth hearing, and, in truth, I cannot speak of them before a crowd who care naught for me, and know naught of me."

"Nonsense, nonsense," cried the old lord; "there is no crowd there; the knights and the men-at-arms are all in the hall, the duchess sups in her own bower, with none but myself and Adela, and one whom you must love and like, the young Lord Louis de Chamblé. He saved my life at Ermenonville, and is very dear to me. The duchess asks for your presence, too, and you must obey."

"But," said Albert Denyn, "perhaps she does not know—"

"Yes, yes, she does know," replied the old nobleman, "she knows more than I did, till she herself told me: that it was the emperor himself who gave you that chain and surcoat; so come, my good youth, without farther words."

Thus speaking, the count turned into the castle again, and Albert Denyn followed to the presence of the Duchess of Orleans.

The page's garb was now thrown aside, the princess had resumed her own attire, and with it her manner had become more dignified and calm, though not without a spice of gay coquetry from time to time, which sat not ill upon her pretty features. She welcomed the young soldier graciously enough; but, after the first formal compliment to herself, the eyes of Albert Denyn instantly turned to the only other male person present, the Lord of Mauvinet having left the room for an instant, in order to give directions for watching the castle walls during the night. By the side of the duchess was seated the young nobleman of whom the count had spoken. He was handsome and prepossessing in look, distinguished in demeanour, and with every external sign

of one as likely to win a lady's heart as to gain the approbation of those on whose decision her hand depended.


Albert Denyn found that there was nothing that he could find fault with in the whole appearance of the young Lord of Chamblé, unless, indeed, it were the slightest possible tinge of superciliousness in his manner towards himself; but yet he loved him not, and felt towards him all that eager jealousy which can exist so well in love without hope.

The Count de Mauvinet soon returned, and, although he little doubted that the dark masses which they had seen were, as Albert Denyn suspected, the revolted serfs, pausing only for the night in their advance to attack the very castle where he was, yet so hardened was the mind of the veteran soldier to danger, that he seemed to cast all thought of it from him, enjoyed to the full the period of refreshment and rest afforded to him, and laughed gayly over the joyous board, even while the hard hand of peril was knocking at the very gates.

Notwithstanding all Albert Denyn's unwillingness, the good old lord pressed him almost in a tone of command to relate all that had befallen him in foreign countries. Adela's sweet eyes brightened at the very thought, and the Duchess of Orleans herself added her voice, which, of course, was not to be refused. We must not pause upon Albert's history. He told it as one who, having great deeds to recount, was fearful, even in seeming, to overrate his own merit. He referred, then, not to himself so much as to Captal de Buch. It was thus acted the capital here, so spoke the capital there; here were the pagans defeated, there a body of the Teutonic knights were saved.

Those who knew him well understood the whole matter; and even the Duchess of Orleans, with a woman's tact, comprehended that he might have spoken more of himself if he had so willed, while Adela, with her colour varying every moment, gazed down upon the ground, and the good old Lord of Mauvinet forced him by questions to relate a great part of that which he had withheld.

The keen eyes of the Duchess of Orleans, too, were not long in discovering more of the secrets of Albert's heart than he fancied that either word, or look, or tone displayed; and she marked, not without a certain degree of playful malice, that there were no very kindly



glances passed between the young soldier and the gay Lord of Chamblé. It might come across her mind, too—for she had many of those little faults which checker the brighter part of woman's character—it might come across her mind, too, to give some brief pain to the heart of poor Adela de Mauvinet by coquetting with him who, she saw, was not a little loved; but better thoughts came after, and generous feelings whispered, "This youth served and protected me, not knowing who I was, and I will reward him in the way he will best like."

"Come hither, Albert Denyn," she said, after supper was over, as she sat in somewhat a queenly state, with the rest of the party ranged round, "I owe you some recompense for my safe escort hither, and you shall have this string of pearls to match your golden chain. Kneel, good youth, and I will put it on. The first time you carry this through a body of the Jacques, I will ask knighthood for you at the dauphin's own hand."

"It shall not be long, lady," replied Albert Denyn while the princess hung the pearls to the chain given him by the emperor; but the duchess at the same time bent down her head, saying, in a lower tone, "Now mark, if I do not reward you better still! so do not let idle jealousy lose you opportunity, while I sport with a fool's vanity."

No one but Albert heard the words which she uttered; and he rose and went back to his place, scarcely comprehending their meaning himself. In a few minutes, however, he saw the duchess call the attention of the Lord of Chamblé, and during the whole of the evening, ere she retired to rest, she left no fascination of tone, look, or manner untried upon the young knight to withdraw him from Adela de Mauvinet, and attach him to herself. She had not so easy a task as she had expected, however: Louis de Chamblé was not so weak as she had imagined; and the beauty of Adela was so far superior to her own, that the vague charm of her rank was not sufficient to counterbalance the exceeding loveliness of the old seneschal's daughter. The result was, that the princess became somewhat piqued at her own want of success, and then, presuming on her station, she exacted, but more severely, those attentions which she saw were burdensome.

Thus, from time to time, Albert Denyn had an opportunity of saying much to her he loved. On the subject

of his attachment, indeed, he did not speak ; but all he saw in the demeanour of Adela herself was sufficient to tell him that, as far as her affections went, he had no cause of jealousy in regard to the young Lord of Chamblé.

Thus passed the first evening in the castle of Beaumont sur Oyse ; and when the duchess rose to seek repose, which was not till a late hour of the night, she laid her hand upon that of Adela, saying, " You shall lie in my chamber, sweet lady. Fare you well, knights and gentlemen, and good dreams sit on your pillows."

" Albert, come with me," said the old Lord of Mauvinet : " you shall tell me something more of yourself ere I sleep. Good-night, my Lord of Chamblé : we will talk farther on the subject of which you spoke to me this morning, when we see what to-morrow brings forth. All I can reply at present is, you have my best wishes."

The Lord of Chamblé remained alone in the room after the others left it ; and, if one might judge by the frown upon his brow, the subject of his meditations was not very pleasant. At length, however, he started from his fit of thought and retired to his own chamber ; but it was not to sleep, for there were those passions in his heart that are the bitterest foes to slumber.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

" He will have his best wishes !" muttered Albert Denyn to himself, meditating on what the Lord of Mauvinet had said, while, about an hour after the duchess had retired, he wandered round the dark battlements of Beaumont. All that those few words might imply, all that they might produce, came up before the mind of the young soldier, saddening his heart, and once more drowning out every spark of hope, if, indeed, he can be said to have entertained any.

" I am a fool," he continued : " I dream of things that can never be, and then my heart is wrung to wake and find that I have been dreaming : but, hark ! What is that sound ? Some people speaking in the court beneath. I thought that all but the guards upon the walls were sound asleep."

The words that were uttered below rose up to him as he stood above, and he heard one man say to the other, "Do not let us wait for them any longer. Go in, I say, and down the steps; we cannot lose our way, and they must come after, if they will."

"But are you sure that we can get out at the other end?" demanded another voice. "Is there no door to keep us in?"

"None," answered the first, "none, I tell you. It opens out among the furze bushes two hundred yards beyond the moat. Hark! I hear the rest coming."

"Men deserting from the castle!" said Albert to himself; "I must go and wake the Lord of Mauvinet; though it is better, indeed, that the cowards should be away than remain here to cast ice upon brave men's hearts."

Nevertheless, he turned his steps in haste towards the apartment where he had left the count; but, ere he had reached the spot at which a flight of steps descended from the battlements, the young Lord of Chamblé cast himself in his way, saying, "Stay, young man, I have a word of advice to give you."

"You must choose some other time, then, my lord," replied Albert Denyn; "at present I am in haste."

"And yet you must stay," rejoined the Lord of Chamblé, in a cold and somewhat sneering tone. "What I have to tell you is of moment, too; for if you do not attend to it, you may fall into disgrace."

"Stand back, sir, and let me pass," cried Albert Denyn. "There are men deserting from the castle, and it may be my good lord's wish to stop them. Stand back, I say, or by the heaven above us I will cast you over into the court beneath! Each moment you are doing an injury you can never repair;" and, thrusting the young knight out of his way with a force that he could not resist, Albert Denyn strode on, attending but little to the fierce mutterings of the angry noble, and soon reached the apartments of the count.

A door opening at once from the stairs led into an antechamber, where two stout yeomen slept with their bed drawn across the entrance of the inner room. It was with difficulty that Alfred Denyn woke them, but having at length, if we may use the expression, undrawn these living bolts, he entered the chamber of the count, and strove to rouse the page, who lay on a truckle-bed

at the old nobleman's feet. The boy, like the yeomen, however, tired out with a long day's march, slept like the rock on which the castle was built; and ere Albert Denyn had made the slightest progress in awakening him, the count started up, demanding, "Who is there?"

The matter was soon explained; and the count, rising at once, threw on his furred gown, exclaiming, "We must stay these cowards: they will do quite as well upon the battlements as marks for the enemy's arrows, as better men."

"I fear, my lord, it is too late," replied Albert Denyn; "for I met your good friend, the Lord of Chamblé, who would insist upon stopping me to speak of something, I know not what, and in the mean time the mischief must have been done."

"Lead on, however," cried the old lord; "lead on to the spot where you heard these voices. We must see how they contrived to escape, at least; for, by the duchess's permission, I ordered all the gates to be strictly closed, and watched by my own men."

As Albert Denyn anticipated, the court was found deserted, but the path which the deserters had taken was discovered without difficulty. A large arched doorway, through which a tall horse could be led with ease, was open on the eastern side of the court; and when, by the light of torches, which were soon procured, Albert and the Lord of Mauvinet entered the passage with which the door communicated, and advanced some fifty or sixty paces therein, they could hear the sound of horses' feet echoing along the vault from a distance, showing that the fugitives were beyond recall.

The old lord pursued the examination, however, observing, with a grim smile, "This place may serve as an entrance for brave enemies, as well as an exit for cowardly friends." Various gates and heavy doors were found all left wide open; and these being closed, and other precautions taken for the defence of the place, the Lord of Mauvinet and his companions returned to the court, to inquire who were the deserters, and how many effective soldiers were left within the walls. Just as they were issuing from the vault, however, they were met by the young Lord of Chamblé, who advanced furiously upon Albert Denyn, exclaiming, "Villain, you struck me! and if I live another hour I will punish you as such a presumptuous slave deserves."

Though the blood mounted high on Albert Denyn's cheek, and his heart burned within him, he replied calmly, though sternly, "I struck you not, my lord, though I thrust you from my way when you stayed me in doing my duty. Villain I am none, young sir, thanks to God and the hand of the emperor; and as to presumption, I know not what you mean; for I have never presumed towards you at least."

"My Lord of Chamblé," cried the Count de Mauvinet, "I must beseech you to forbear. This youth is as noble in heart as any in the land: I owe him more than life; my daughter, and my daughter's safety. Believe me, you have mistaken him: he could never intend to offend you, and only acted in haste, as no time was to be lost; he is not one to presume in any shape."

"My lord count, you are blind," replied the young knight, sharply: "you see not how far he dares to presume. Ay, sir, he does presume upon some slight services he may have rendered; he presumes, I say, to raise his insolent eyes even to your daughter, and yet you see it not."

The count gazed on the young lord's face as if struck dumb, and then turned a stern, inquiring glance upon Albert Denyn, whose cheek was very pale, and whose look was bent upon the ground.

"Speak," cried the Lord of Mauvinet, "speak, Albert. Do you not hear this charge?"

"I hear, my lord," answered Albert, "a vague charge, which implies a falsehood that it does not boldly assert. If this lord would merely say that I love your daughter, he tells the truth; for who could live with her as I have lived and not love her? I do, my lord; I love her better than any other being or thing on earth; the companion of my childhood, the friend of my youth, the brightest and the best of earthly beings. But this, my lord, is a privilege of the lowest in all the land: to love and admire that which is fair and high. It is a duty of chivalry, and from such duties I am not now, thank God, excluded. But if he would say that I love her with but one purpose or one thought that is not high and noble; if by the words, 'raising my eyes to her,' he means that I aspire to that which is impossible, I tell him that he lies to his beard, and will prove it on him with—"

"Hush, hush!" exclaimed the Lord of Mauvinet, who

had listened in stern thoughtfulness while the young soldier spoke; "I will not suffer such words to pass on either side; at least, not in times of peril like these, when every sword is wanted against the bosoms of the enemy. My lord, you have done Albert wrong. Every one on this bright earth has a right to choose out his fair lady, to love and serve her by all honourable means; and the highest châtelain in all the land, nay, the queen herself upon her throne, receives honour from the love of any gentleman, however poor his estate, provided he pass not the bounds of due respect. So say the laws of chivalry, my lord; and due respect, I am right sure, Albert Denyn will never forget towards the daughter of his friend. Nay, frown not, my good lord: I entreat you both, forbear all angry words and all sharp discussions. He who says one syllable more, at least till all these troubles be appeased, makes an enemy of me. Let each man honour the lady that he loves by doing great deeds in behalf of his native land; and so no more of this! Now call all the soldiers in the castle forth, and let us see who are these runaways."

"My lord, my lord," cried a trooper, coming in breathless haste from the walls above, "there is danger abroad. The bands of villeins are advancing against the castle, I do believe, for I heard but now a rushing sound coming up from the plain. It was like the noise of a full stream, or a heavy wind blowing through a forest in the winter; and then came a sharp cry, mingled, it seemed, with groans; I fear they have come upon some poor fellow's house, and murdered those within."

"More likely have caught the cowards who have deserted," replied the Lord of Mauvinet, "and given them due punishment for their treachery. Away to the walls, call all the men out. Carry forth torches on the battlements, and light the beacon on the highest tower! Let them see that we are prepared for them."

Thus saying, the good seneschal strode up to the platform to look out. Albert Denyn and several others followed close upon him, but all was obscurity round about. The moon was down, not a star was in the sky. The old trees which surrounded the castle at no great distance could hardly be distinguished from the dark masses of the ground; and in vain the eye of the count plunged into the void of the night, seeking for human forms; he could discover nothing. There was a low

rustle, indeed, but nothing like the voice of man met the ear ; it might be the wind beginning to rise ; it might be the rushing of the Oyse, heard through the stillness of the night.

"Can you see anything, Albert?" whispered the seneschal to the young man-at-arms, with his eyes bent sternly upon the darkness, "can you see anything? I am blind, I think."

Albert Denyn did not reply, but he put his hand back to one of the yeomen who stood a step behind, took the long bow of yew which he carried from him, and said, in a low voice, "An arrow!"

The youth laid the feather to the string, stretched forth his left arm to its full extent, and drew his right hand to his ear. The string twanged, the arrow whizzed from the bow, and the next instant a shrill cry of agony, followed by a confused murmur and the rushing sound of many feet, rose from the other side of the moat. Almost at the same moment the flame of the beacon towered up high in the air above, and a crowd of grim faces and shadowy forms were seen by the glare, within half a bowshot of the walls.

"Well done, my boy! well done, Albert!" cried the seneschal: "you have sent one of them to Satan's kingdom, at all events. Now, my men, bring us up some piles of wood. We must keep up a blaze along the battlements till daybreak, lest they try to take us un-awares."

No attack was made, however, during the night, by the immense body of armed peasantry which now surrounded the castle. Some one of importance seemed to have been hit by Albert Denyn's shaft, and when daylight dawned, a great deal of confusion and hurrying to and fro was still remarked among them. Still it was an awful sight to see that ocean of grim faces, marked by every wild and savage passion, and that crowd of powerful forms, covered with every sort of wild and unusual arms, all surrounding the castle of Beaumont, which, alas! now numbered within its walls not more than forty persons capable of making any effectual defence.

The good Lord of Mauvinet counted the garrison over eagerly, but with an undaunted look; and when some one said, in a low tone, "We shall never be able to keep the place," he replied, "I have fled once from them,

and I will not fly again. The place is strong; and were the women not here, I would hold it out till the very last, and die among the walls, rather than abandon them. Would to God the women were not here! they cow my heart, and make an infant of me. However, we must double our energies and our activity. You, Albert, defend the north tower with your companion, Scroope, and four of the soldiery. It is one of the points of the greatest danger. My Lord of Chamblé, you, with your men, take the eastern side. It is scarcely less perilous than the other. Herestall and Huguenin, you to the south tower; the west needs no defence but its own walls. I will be with you all from time to time. There seems to be store of arrows, quarrels, and every implement of war in the place: we will have them brought up as speedily as possible, and you must pour them upon the enemy without ceasing. The duchess said there were mangonels somewhere they might serve us bravely if we could find them. Let some one ask her where they may be found."

In about half an hour the attack of the castle commenced, and was met with that sort of gallant determination which renders small means more available than the most extensive supplies in the hands of the irresolute. We will not pause, however, to detail the strife that took place, for we may have had too much of such things already. Suffice it, that it was waged with wild and savage fury on the one part, and with steady, though fiery courage on the other, through the greater part of the day.

It is strange what companionship in such scenes of peril and exertion can do to soften animosities, and make even the fiercest passions of the human heart forget their virulence, at least for a time. Towards three o'clock, Albert Denyn perceived that the attack, which had slackened on his own side, was directed against the eastern wall, where the young Lord of Chamblé had been placed, and he sent three of his men to give him aid in repelling it. Shortly after the tide turned again, and the northern tower was once more assailed with violence. Louis of Chamblé then came round himself to ask how the day went with Albert Denyn, and to see if he could give him help in driving back the enemy.

Albert thanked him, but said no; and, pointing with

his hand to a spot amid the crowd beneath the walls, he added, "We must all look well to ourselves now, my good lord, for the fiercest of the strife is yet to come. Do you see that man on horseback?"

"Ay," answered the young knight; "I saw him before, at Ermenonville. Who is he? He seems to have just arrived."

"He has so, my lord," replied Albert. "Hitherto these fools have been knocking their heads against stone walls; but now you will find them better directed. That man is the fiend, William Caillet! I would willingly give my right hand to-morrow morning to be one hour with him upon the hill-side this night."

The anticipations of Albert Denyn proved correct. The plan of the assault was immediately changed; the northern and eastern parts of the castle of Beaumont were left comparatively at peace, though two strong bodies of the revolted peasantry still remained opposite to them; but the principal attack was directed at once against the southern tower, which was a large building lately added to the old castle of Beaumont, and connected with it by an arch over the moat which had not yet been carried round it.

There was now no longer any wavering, any hesitation among the insurgents: the assault of the peasantry was not only fierce, but incessant; and labouring with pickaxes and iron bars, though numbers of them fell by arrows and by stones cast down upon their heads, they succeeded in shaking the foundation of one part of the tower; and towards seven o'clock, a large portion of the wall gave way, crushing a number of assailants under it, but leaving an entrance open into the tower itself.

The Lord of Mauvinet, with one of his chief followers named Herestall, had taken the defence of that part upon themselves; but both Albert Denyn and the young Lord of Chamblé, seeing that the assault had ceased at every other point, had yielded to their impatience, and joined the party in the tower.

When the first stones were loosened from the foundations, however, Albert Denyn had disappeared; but he returned just at the moment when, the fall of the wall being inevitable, the seneschal and the rest were retiring from the spot which had been undermined.

"We must defend the bridge over the moat, Albert,"

said the Lord of Mauvinet, "or break it down, if it be possible."

"I have thought of that, my lord," replied the youth; "and everything is prepared."

"It is very strong, is it not?" demanded the Count: "how long will it take to throw it down?"

"One minute, and three blows of an axe," replied the young soldier: "I have had the beams sawn underneath."

"Thanks, thanks, my dear boy," replied the Lord of Mauvinet: "you have saved us half a dozen lives at least."

"Then I beseech you let me finish the work, my lord," replied Albert: "I would give a year of life to strike one blow, hand to hand, with the enemy."

"Do it, do it, my dear boy," said the old lord. "There, there goes the wall!" and down it rolled in thunder.

"Away with you, away with you, over the bridge, my men," cried the seneschal; "Albert, you and I will be the last."

"I with you! I with you!" exclaimed the young Lord of Chamblé.

"Ay, but we are all under Albert's command for the moment," said the count: "he breaks down the bridge! He has won the honour well. Here, here they come! Back, back, my lord, to the bridge! Now, Albert, now, my boy, give them not too much time. This axe is heavier than yours."

Albert caught the ponderous weapon from the seneschal's hand, and retreating side by side with him, he struck a blow with his full force upon the spot where he had caused the woodwork to be sawn through on one side of the bridge. A large portion of the structure, stone, and lime, and beams, and iron, plunged down in dust and ruin into the moat beneath.

"Quick, my lord, quick!" he cried; "pass over! Treat lightly, I beseech you!"

"They are breaking down the bridge, they are breaking down the bridge," cried the voices of the peasantry, rushing up over the fallen walls of the tower.

"Out of my way, out of my way," shouted the thundering voice of Caillet; and, darting forward with the leap of a tiger, he sprang towards Albert Denyn, who stood with one foot upon the entrance of the bridge, and the other upon the threshold of the arched doorway, which led to the platform of the captured tower.

"That to send thee to hell," cried Caillet, striking a sweeping blow with his long sword at the neck of Albert Denyn.

But the young soldier caught it upon his shield, without wavering more than if he had been struck with a willow wand; and whirling the battle-axe over his head, he dashed it with such force upon the helmet of Caillet, that, driving in the steel cap, it hurled him backward, wounding and bleeding, into the mass of peasantry that were following close behind. With one bound, Albert Denyn then sprang across the bridge, and two more blows upon the woodwork of the ruined arch placed a yawning chasm between the southern tower and the old castle of Beaumont.

A flight of arrows, which told sadly among the peasantry in the tower, now poured upon them from the walls of the castle; and in a few minutes after, the part of the building they had gained was abandoned by the Jacques, who retired, carrying with them, apparently with much care, one of their wounded leaders to a group of trees at some little distance. The rest of the insurgent force around the castle remained firm, but did not renew the attack; and as Albert Denyn, with a feeling of proud satisfaction at his heart, stood leaning on the battle-axe which had done such good service, and gazing out upon the dark masses of the enemy, the good Lord of Mauvinet grasped him by the hand, saying, "I trust you have killed the villain, Albert. I never yet beheld a better blow; but come, they will do no more to-night, and we all want refreshment. We will place a watch upon the walls, and see for some wine and meat."

Thus speaking, the old nobleman turned away, and descended to the hall; but Albert Denyn remained upon the battlements, musing deeply and sadly upon the fruitlessness of all that he could do to remove the original stain of his birth. After pausing for about half an hour, he sent down for some food, saying that he wished to remain on the walls and watch; and it was there that he saw the dull shades of night creep on once more upon the gray and heavy sky.

He was sitting thus upon one of the stone benches of the parapet, when the young Lord of Chamblé approached the spot where he had placed himself, and said, "I have come to seek you myself, for your noble friend, the Lord of Mauvinet, wishes to speak with you."

Albert rose in silence and followed him; and as they passed through one of the stone passages where there was a torch, he saw the eye of the young nobleman fixed upon him with a look of much interest, though there was still some sternness mixed with it. What was to come next Albert Denyn did not know; but it is only people of unsteady minds that are ever taken by surprise; men of strong principles are always prepared.

On entering the hall, he found the Lord of Mauvinet alone; his sword, unbuckled, lay upon the table before him, and there was an expression of stern sadness about him which was soon explained. He held out his hand to Albert Denyn, who kissed it affectionately, and the seneschal then said, "Albert, my mind is made up never to yield the castle of Beaumont. I will hold it out to the last; but, as I told you this morning, the thought that there are four women in it, and one of them so high in rank, hangs like a weight upon me. I have determined to send them away: I have spoken to the duchess, and she consents. They must have a small guard; and your hand, which has so often defended and delivered Adela, must protect her now."

Albert Denyn cast himself upon his knee before his ancient master: "My lord, I do beseech you," he cried, "let me stay with you; let me stay and share your fate, whatever it may be; to die with you, if God wills it so, and, if not, to live and share your glory. Hear me, my lord, hear me. I know that the task you would give me is one of danger, honour, and high esteem; but here is this noble gentleman standing beside you, much more worthy of the distinction than I am: fitted in all respects to give protection to the Lady Adela, and doubtless desirous to show what great deeds he can do in her defence. Let him go upon this generous task, my lord, which befits him far better than it does me, while I, a poor adventurer, without home or name, remain to do what is indeed my duty, and defend with my heart's blood that good old master to whom I owe everything from childhood until now."

The tears came into the old seneschal's eyes, and he laid his hand fondly on Albert's head, saying, "God bless you, my son; but it must not be. You know that I value my children more than my own life; and if I should die, you will live to be the defence and prop of my son, who, thank God, is safe, as yet, in Touraine. You will not

refuse to go with Adela, Albert : this noble lord accompanies you ; and to your mutual care and honour I confide both her and that high lady who takes part in the journey. Fear not for me, Albert. I doubt not to hold out the castle till help arrives ; the more so, indeed, now that other tower is gone. With our small means it was but an encumbrance, and it can do nothing now against us."

"But, my lord," replied Albert Denyn, "we take men from you."

"Not half so many as were required to defend that tower," replied the old lord. "I shall give you but four, your companion Scroope and three others. You two will make six ; there are four women, ten in all."

"But think you, my lord," said Albert, "that we shall be able to cut our way through with so small a force ?"

"You must not make the attempt," replied the old lord : "our sally from Ermenonville has put them upon their guard ; but the passage, the passage underground, my dear boy : the duchess has shown me where it issues forth. It is to the right, there, far beyond their line : at least, beyond where their line was when the sun set."

"Then why not come yourself, my lord," said Albert : "let us all abandon the castle : you cannot be expected—"

"No, no," cried the veteran soldier, "I have fled once, I will not fly twice for all the Jacques in Brie. Not a word more, my boy. Guide the ladies all safe to Meaux ; the market-place there is impregnable ; then send me help as speedily as possible. But remember, both of you, young men," he continued, "that the safety of those who are dearest to me may be fatally compromised if there be still one thought of misunderstanding between you."

"There shall be none on my part, noble count," replied the young Lord of Chamblé, holding out his hand frankly to Albert Denyn. "I find I have mistaken him ; if we must still be rivals, our rivalry, for the time, at least, shall consist alone in seeing who can do most to guide, defend, and comfort the ladies committed to our charge. What say you ? do you pledge yourself to this ?"

"By my honour and hopes of heaven," replied Albert Denyn, grasping the hand the other gave him. "When shall we set out, my lord ?"

"Some two hours hence," answered the Count d'

Mauvinet. "They will all then be asleep. Nevertheless, you must proceed with great caution. Let one go out first, to make sure that there is no party beyond the mouth of the vault. If he do not come back or give a signal, the rest can follow. In the mean time, I will send some flights of arrows among them from the other side, so as to create confusion in that quarter."

"In an hour and a half, my lord, then, I will be ready," said Albert Denyn, "and yet I would fain stay; but I will obey you in this also, and, if I live, will, bring you succour ere three days be over. Fare you well, then, for the present, my lord: I will go and watch those men. This night is somewhat lighter than the last, and I should much fear for the result of our expedition, did I not trust that the head which was most likely to watch for our destruction lies on an aching pillow, with no great power to rise."

"Ay, or on a still one, from which it will never rise again," replied the Lord of Mauvinet.

As Albert Denyn had said, the night was somewhat clearer, and his last look from the battlements, ere he descended to the courtyard at the appointed hour, showed him that, as before, the principal body of the insurgents lay before the great gates of the castle, while another smaller party, but still some thousands strong, were pressed close round a postern to the east, by which they doubtless thought than an escape might be attempted.

"Keep the torches moving quickly round the walls," said Albert to one of the sentinels on guard; and then, mounting to the beacon tower, he bade the man slacken the flame a little, saying, "Our good lord is going to give them soon a flight or two of arrows."

After one more glance towards the fields, he descended, and found all prepared. Adela and the duchess, with two other women, appeared a moment or two after; the first with her countenance very pale, the second preserving the same light and somewhat careless bearing which she had always hitherto maintained.

"Here, young gentleman," she said, as soon as she saw Albert, "tell your sweet friend, here, that there is not so much danger as she fancies. Me she will not believe."

"I trust that there is not much danger, indeed," replied Albert; "for if we find that there is any one near

the sally-port, or whatever it may be, at the end of the vault, we can but retreat to the castle again, and my good lord will keep some one there to give us admission."

"I will, I will," replied the old Lord of Mauvinet; "but I will see you forth myself. Now lead the horses. Do you know, madam," he continued, speaking to the duchess, "whether the roof rises, so that you can mount before you issue forth?"

"Oh yes, my lord," she replied; "there are some fifty yards of a dark sort of cavern in the rock, beyond the last gate; one can mount there. My Lord of Chamblé, you are my knight for the time; you shall win high thanks if you bring me safe to Meaux."

Thus speaking, she led the way onward through the vault, lighted by a single torch, with the horses brought after. The Lord of Mauvinet paused for a moment to give some orders for diverting the attention of the insurgents to the other side of the castle, and then followed quickly. The vault was long, and not a word was spoken: the hearts of all there present were too full for words. At length, however, they reached the last door, and entered the natural cavern.

"Farewell, my lord," said the duchess, extending her hand to the count. The old seneschal pressed his lips upon it, and then casting his arms round his daughter, he held her to his heart with a long and a close embrace. Adela's tears fell quick upon his cheek as he bent to kiss her; and, feeling that it was too much for either of them to speak, he lifted her on her horse in silence.

"Albert," said the count, in a low, but solemn voice, grasping the young soldier's hand, "Albert, I trust her to you, with but one injunction—mark, you obey it! Should you all be made prisoners by these slaves, let her not fall alive into their hands. You understand me. Slay her, if you love her. Slay her, as I would slay her; and her spirit and mine will thank you for it in heaven."

"I will give her my daggers my lord," replied Albert, calmly: "I shall be dead ere then!"

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## CHAPTER XVII.

"I CANNOT follow them so fast, Albert, I cannot follow them so fast : my horse is very lame, and will not go on."

"Yet a little while, dear lady, yet a little while : I fear we are not past all danger yet. Their bands stretch out far and wide around the castle, and methinks I see a light yonder which may belong to them. Stay, I will dismount and look what is the matter ; perhaps it may be a stone in the beast's foot."

It was in vain, however, that Albert Denyn examined ; no stone could he find ; but still the horse went lame, and could not keep up with the rest.

"What is the matter ?" demanded the voice of the duchess, as she remarked a pause and some confusion.

"The lady's horse, madam, is lame," replied Albert, "and cannot follow you so fast ; and yet I am afraid that by any delay we may endanger your safety."

"We must have passed all danger now," said the princess. "There is a light down there—from some peasant's cottage, doubtless. Let us turn our steps thither, and examine what is the matter with the beast."

"Madam," replied Albert, "your security must be the first thing thought of. Let the lady's saddle be put upon my horse ; I will follow you on foot."

"Nay, nay," cried the princess, "that shall never be ! Take her behind you, good youth. Make a pillion of your cloak ; but first let us see what yon light is. We must have gone near two leagues by this time, and I have no fear."

Thus saying, and without waiting for reply, she turned her rein in the direction of the light, and rode on with the young Lord of Chamblé. It soon became evident that they were approaching some huts ; but, before she reached them, Albert Denyn spurred on, and laid his hand upon her bridle, saying, "I beseech you, madam, let me go forward first on foot ; I hear voices speaking. Here, Scroope, hold my rein for a moment, and for Heaven's sake make up a pillion for the Lady Adela behind my saddle. I will be back in an instant, mad-

am ; but if you hear me shout loudly, ride on with all speed, and leave me to my fate."

As he spoke, Albert dismounted and advanced towards the light ; but when he came nearer to the hut, he could distinguish that the sounds which had met his ear as he rode up were those of complaint and pain.

The cabins were few in number ; all were dark save one, and, by the rays that issued from it, Albert gazed around, but could see no human being near. He approached close to the door and listened ; but the first thing that broke the silence was merely a groan of anguish.

"Ah, that does me good to hear," said a shrill voice. "It is medicine to me, it is balm ; but yet I would fain have a drop of water. They have all left me, and they think I will die ; but they are mistaken. Woman, give me a drop of water, and I vow you shall go free : I kept you from them to be my paramour ; but if you will give me a cup of water, I promise you shall go free."

Another deep groan from a spot near broke in upon what he was saying, and then a sweet-toned woman's voice, full of deep sadness, replied, "How can I give thee water with my hands tied ? Think you that, if I could give it to any one, it would not be to my own father, whom you have so inhumanly mangled ?"

"Fiend, give me water," cried the same voice, frantically ; "or when my men come, I will make them dishonour thee before his eyes."

A low sob was the only reply, and Albert Denyn, reassured, thrust open the door and entered.

The scene was a strange and horrible one as ever war, with all its horrors, presented. Cast down in one corner of the hut lay the mangled form of a tall and powerful man, past the middle age, whose dress, though torn and dabbled with blood, bespoke high rank and station. His armour had been stripped off, except the grieves, which were still upon his legs, while both his arms, from the way in which they lay, seemed to be broken. Crouching on the ground near him, with her hands tied behind her back, and gazing upon him with a look full of deep but agonized affection, was a beautiful girl, of perhaps nineteen years of age, who seemed to have suffered no violence, though her robe was spotted with drops of blood, which probably had flowed from the dying man beside her.

A resin torch was stuck in one corner of the hut, and by its light was seen, on the other hand, a low bed piled up with straw, over which was cast a rich crimson cloak. Thereon was stretched the lean and withered form of old Thibalt la Rue, with an arrow still left plunged in his right side, just beneath the arm, which seemed to keep him in great torture, and prevent him from moving hand or foot without pain.

As may well be supposed, all the eyes of those within the cabin were instantly turned upon the opening of the door; and when the fine majestic form of the young soldier appeared, covered with his coat of arms, a look of terror passed over the fiend-like countenance of the old man, while a cry of joy burst from the lips of the fair girl at the other side of the hut.

"It is a gentleman, my father," she cried. "Oh God, it is a gentleman come to help us."

The dying man strove to turn, but could not, and Albert Denyn instantly advancing, cut the cord that tied the lady's hands. Without a pause, she started to a table, on which stood a cup of water, and brought it to her father's lips; while Albert gazed earnestly upon him, saying, "Surely I have seen your face before. Is it possible that I behold my good Lord of St. Leu?"

"Yes, yes!" cried the wounded nobleman, his lips now moistened and refreshed, "and you are the man of all others I would see. Take care of my daughter, good youth. Convey her safely to the Captal de Buch: she has a packet for him in her bosom, which he will give much to have. Away with her, quick! Mind not me. Thank God! she is unpolluted as yet. I trust her to your honour. Away! away!"

His mind, occupied by one all-engrossing thought, evidently took into consideration nothing else; but the poor girl again cast herself on her knees beside him, exclaiming, "I cannot, I will not leave you! Oh my father, let me stay and die beside you."

"Give me some drink! give me some drink!" shrieked the voice of the old man from the other bed. "Monsters, will you not give me some drink? May hell seize upon you all!"

No one attended to him, however; the hour of retribution was come; and the agony he had so often inflicted upon others now fell upon himself.

"I know not how I can save her," said Albert Denyn,

speaking in a low voice to the Lord of St. Leu; "we are ourselves embarrassed for chargers. One has fallen lame, and—"

"There must be horses near," replied the dying man. "Our own cannot be far off. They pursued us as we were trying to escape towards Paris: they caught us not far from this spot, and our beasts must be here. Take her! take her quick!"

"Stay," cried Albert, "I will go and see what can be done."

Thus saying, he left the hut, and found that the Duchess of Orleans and her party had gradually advanced to within a few steps of the spot where it stood. To her and the rest he explained briefly what he had seen. The other hovels were searched immediately, and in one of them three or four horses were found, with a young peasant of some twelve years old dressed in the rich embroidered suit which had once covered a nobleman's son, sound asleep on some straw in a corner of this temporary stable. The boy was roused and tied hand and foot, and two fresh horses were brought forth for Adela and Margaret of St. Leu. There was a third powerful beast, which had evidently been the charger of a man-at-arms; and a vague hope of being able to save the Lord of St. Leu himself crossed the mind of the young soldier as he turned back with Scroope and another to the little hut. The moment he entered the voice of the old man Thibalt assailed him, calling him by name, and beseeching him to bring him some water.

"If you will give me but one drop, Albert Denyn," he said, "I will tell you a secret you would cut off your right hand to hear!"

"Albert Denyn!" cried the young lady of St. Leu, looking at him, "Are you Albert Denyn? Give him some water."

The youth took the cup and filled it from a jar that stood near. The unfortunate wretch clutched it eagerly and drank, and then exclaimed, "More, give me more!"

"What is your secret, then?" demanded Albert Denyn.

"Listen, listen," said the old man.

The youth put down his ear, and Thibalt whispered a word which made the light flash from the young soldier's eyes.

"Give me more drink," cried Thibalt, seeing the effect

that he had produced, "give me more drink, and I will tell thee all."

Albert turned eagerly to seek it; but at that moment the young Lord of Chamblé entered the place, and his eyes fell at once upon old Thibalt la Rue.

"Ha!" he exclaimed. "This is the darkest fiend of them all! Lying on my murdered brother's cloak, too! Down to hell, old monster!" and ere Albert Denyn could stop him, he had driven his dagger into Thibalt's heart. With a yell, a gasp, and a fearful contortion, the wretched old man gave up his spirit to its terrible account.

"My lord, you have stopped words I would have given a world to hear," cried Albert Denyn; "but it is done, and cannot now be helped. Dear lady," he continued, turning to the Lord of St. Leu's daughter, "perhaps we may be able to carry your father with us, if we be not sharply pursued. If he can sit upon a horse at all, I and another will support him in our arms."

"God of heaven reward you!" cried the girl. "I will reward you too. Father, dear father, do you hear him?" and she again turned to gaze in her parent's face.

The wounded man made no reply. The eyes were fixed and glassy: there was a gray shade over the whole countenance; and Albert Denyn, starting forward, gazed at him intently for a moment. He took her hand, saying, "Lady, come away! Your cares are fruitless."

"One moment," she said, in a calmer tone than he expected; "but one moment," and bending down her head, she pressed her lips upon the cold brow of her dead father.

"Now," she continued, "now I am ready. I have no right to keep you longer."

Her eyes were dry, but an unwonted drop glistened on the lids of Albert Denyn as he said, "Alas, poor lady! Would that we could have saved him."

She gave him a grateful look, but made no reply; and he led her out, accompanied by the rest, one of the rude soldiers, before they went, spurning the body of Thibalt la Rue from the straw on which it was stretched, and spreading the cloak over the dead form of the Lord of St. Leu. But few words more were spoken, and none that it may be necessary to repeat; for the recognition of Adela and Margaret of St. Leu was too full of sad feelings on both parts to admit of conversation.

The saddle was changed from the horse which had fallen lame to one of those which had been brought out of the hut, the young lady of St. Leu was placed upon another, and the party once more proceeded in the darkness. Two of the troopers lingered for a moment or two, indeed, and then came up at a quick pace; but Albert Denyn had heard a sharp cry and a groan behind them, and he turned sharply to one of the men, saying, "You have not hurt the boy?"

"Out upon the wolf's whelp!" was the only reply; and Albert very well divined the fate of the unfortunate lad who had been left by the insurgents to guard the horses. It did not surprise him; for such was the merciless conduct of each party to the other, in the fearful strife that was then going on, that no one could hope for pity, if he fell into the hands of the enemy.

It may be easily imagined that the journey was a painful one to all. Apprehension, indeed, decreased every minute, as mile after mile was placed between them and the castle of Beaumont. But there was scarcely one person present who had not some deep cause for care or for sorrow in his breast; and the lightest hearted of the cavalcade seemed to be the Duchess of Orleans herself, who led the way with the young Lord of Chamblé, talking almost gayly, and keeping him constantly by her side.

Margaret of St. Leu, Albert Denyn, and Adela de Mauvinet followed, while between the two latter existed those deep feelings of anxiety and grief for the same objects, and from the same causes, which, like almost every other circumstance that had taken place in their mutual lives, were calculated to draw their hearts closer and closer together, and to render the love which was in the bosom of each unchangeable and eternal. They spoke but little in words, it is true; but their thoughts spoke, and each, in mind, was conversing with the other.

At length, as the gray streaks in the sky told the approach of day, Adela addressed her companion in a low voice, saying, "Where do you think you can obtain help for my father?"

"I know but one place," replied Albert Denyn, "in which it can be found, and but one person capable of giving it: Paris, and the King of Navarre. As soon as you are safe in Meaux, I must hasten to the king;

some other messenger must also be sent; for I risk my liberty by going, and may be arrested before I reach him."

"Oh, he will give no aid," cried Adela. "My father is of the regent's party, and Charles the Bad hates him bitterly; but the Captal de Buch—Albert, where is the capital?"

"By this time he must be in France," answered Albert Denyn. "But, alas! dear lady, he had but sixteen men with him! all the rest were left behind to aid the Teutonic knights: the dauphin is powerless, and there is no time to be lost."

"I fear there is not," said Adela, "I fear there is not, indeed. Oh, tell me the truth, Albert, tell me the whole truth. My father put on a face of hope and confidence, and said he could hold out the castle for a week. But I heard something of one of the towers being taken."

"That is no disadvantage, dear lady," replied Albert. "The tower was a weak point rather than a defence. We have broken down the bridge between it and the castle, and, as they have no machines of war, it gives them no assistance. I trust your father may hold out for a week, perhaps longer; the more so, as I believe that villain Caillet—who, from his talent, is more to be dreaded than all the rest—is at least disabled for a time. If his casque had not been of the best tried steel, he would have been a corpse ere now. As it was, the battle-axe must have reached his head; for I saw the blood start as he fell."

"God forgive me that I must rejoice," said Adela, "at any man's sufferings."

"I think he is dead, lady," joined in one of the troopers who was riding near; "for I beheld the blow given, and he went down much like a dead man."

"No, no," answered Albert Denyn; "he died not on the spot; for I afterward saw him walk to the rear, supported by two of his base companions; but, for a time at least, I trust that he is disabled. That old man, too, cannot direct them now; and he was as shrewd a miscreant as ever lived. It was a serviceable bow that sent that arrow to his breast."

"I rather think it was your own, Master Albert," replied the soldier who had previously spoken; "for that young wolf told us, before Peter cut his throat,

that the old knave was wounded by an arrow, shot in the darkness of the night, on their very first arrival under Beaumont."

"That is strange, indeed," said Albert Denyn; and after a moment's musing, he added, "Let us hope for the best, dear lady. Look where the sun is rising brightly; so may a better day rise for us all!"

"God grant it!" cried Adela; "God grant it!" And she turned her glistening eyes on him who spoke, with a look which seemed to say, that if her day was to be bright, his happiness must have a share in making it so. "But still, Albert," she continued, "still some aid must be sought for my father. Whither shall we turn for that?"

"If the capital has not passed on yet to Paris," replied Albert, "he cannot be very far distant. I know the road he is to take; I will seek him, and ask his counsel. Perhaps we can raise men; call the nobles to arms throughout the country, and march against these savages at once. But, lo! surely those are the build-ings of Meaux. Two hours more will bring us thither."

Adela looked forward, and saw at the edge of the plain that they were now traversing some tall towers and spires, with several glistening pieces of water; but why, she could not tell, her bosom did not experience that joy which the sensation of renewed security generally inspires. She asked herself what next was to happen; and felt that, if the heart be prophetic, no great happiness awaited her there.

After a pause of about an hour, in a small town not far from the spot where Meaux first appeared to their eyes, they again renewed their journey, and entered the city about midday. There were many people in the streets, and a number more came out to gaze upon them as they passed; but Albert Denyn could not help thinking that he saw some scowling malevolence in the eyes of the citizens. Opposite the principal church, however, they were met by the mayor, to whom the Duchess of Orleans was known, and to whom she had sent forward a messenger from their last halting-place. He received her with fawning smiles and lowly inclinations of the head, and besought her to take up her residence in the town-house, at least for a time; but while they were yet parleying on the subject, a messenger arrived in breathless haste, saying, "That the

young Duchess of Normandy, having heard of her fair aunt's arrival, entreated to beg that she would join her instantly in the great market-place, where she and some other persons of quality were then residing."

The duchess rode on accordingly; and Albert Denyn followed with the rest, thinking it not a little strange to hear that the wife of the dauphin, the regent of the kingdom, should be making her abode in the stats of Meaux. As they rode on, however, and passed over the old bridge across the River Marne, he perceived the meaning of that term which he had before not understood. The stream of the Marne itself flowed between the city and the market-place, which was situated on an island, formed by a river and by a deep and broad canal. A number of fine edifices surrounded the square where the weekly markets were held, and these buildings were protected by walls, towers, and ditches, like a regular fortress. The fortifications did not, indeed, embrace the whole of the island, the unenclosed space being covered by green pasture, upon which some cattle and sheep were feeding peacefully.

At the fortified gate of the market-place, when the fugitives from Beaumont arrived there, stood two men-at-arms, and two or three domestic servants, as it appeared; and when the great doors were thrown open, and Albert Denyn, together with the rest of the troop, followed the Duchess of Orleans in, the first object that his eyes lighted upon was the young Duchess of Normandy, with a number of other ladies and female attendants, come forth to greet her noble relation; but he was surprised to see only two or three pages, and still fewer serving-men, without a single knight or man-at-arms to give them protection.

The two ladies embraced eagerly, and continued in conversation for some time, while the gentlemen who had accompanied the Duchess of Orleans remained at some little distance. At length, the princess beckoned to Albert Denyn, and he could see at his approach that her face was graver than he had beheld it before.

"You are weary, and wellnigh exhausted," said the duchess; "and yet, good youth, I doubt not that you will undertake to ride forth again within an hour, to do good service both to me and the lady that you love."

"I proposed, madam," replied Albert, "but to feed my horse, and to set out in order to rejoin the noble

Capit de Buch, and lead him to the deliverance of the Lord of Mauvinet."

The lady paused thoughtfully, and then said, "Well, that must do. Can you trust the man Scroope to deliver a message faithfully?"

"I think I can, madam," answered Albert Denyn. "But let me hear its nature."

"The message I would send," replied the duchess, "is to the regent, now at Monterreaux. I would have him told, that, left wellnigh defenceless as we are, we doubt the faith of the people of Meaux; and that, notwithstanding all the oaths and protestations of John Soulas and his companions, we believe him to be a knave, and that they mean to play us false. We would beseech the dauphin to return directly with force to deliver us, or worse may come of it. Now, good youth, take the man Scroope with you—you will find fresh horses in the stable. You can either trust him to seek the capit, and go on with the message to the regent, or you can send him to the regent and seek the capit yourself. But I will tell you, that he who bears this message to the dauphin will meet the best reward in the regent's power to bestow."

"Madam," replied Albert Denyn, "Scroope's path and mine will lie for some way together. Perhaps I may meet the capit ere we are obliged to separate; for that noble lord comes by Provins and Melun. But if we are forced to part, believe me, madam, by all I hold most dear, I will do that which in my poor judgment seems at the time best calculated to bring you speedy aid; for if I judge rightly, the Lord of Mauvinet can make good his part much longer than you could do here with the very few men you have about you."

"There are some soldiers, sir, on the walls," answered the Duchess of Normandy; "but, alas! they are not many."

"No time is then to be lost, your highness," replied Albert Denyn: "I will go forth at once."

"At least take some refreshment," said the duchess. "Happily, we have abundance here; though, alas! each meal that we eat we know not but it may be the last. There are plenty of fresh horses in the stables."

Albert was turning away; but the Duchess of Orleans followed him a step, and then said, in a low voice, "Your devotion pleases me, sir, and is worthy of high reward."

In those points that you hold most dear, I will take care that you shall not lose by your absence. Though the page was not happy that loved the lady of high degree, yet there are times and seasons when the differences of station are swept away, and when bold love, if joined with valour and with virtue, may be successful. Say a word to your fair lady before you go. Ask her if she have a token to send to her father; and now, fare you well. My Lord of Chamblé," she continued, raising her voice, "I would speak with you for a moment. You must conduct our defence for us here in case of need, for we have great fear of these men of Meaux."

The young nobleman advanced; but Albert Denyn stopped him for a moment as he passed, saying, "Farewell, my lord: perhaps we may never meet again; but I know I leave the Lady Adela under the protection of a good knight and a strong sword. I think you heard what her father said to me as we parted. I trust that task to you, should such a dreadful day ever come; and I beseech you, and this noble lady also, to take care of that poor forlorn girl, whose father we saw expire last night."

A few words to Adela, and a few to the orphan lady of St. Leu, were all that Albert Denyn indulged in; and then explaining to Scroope the task that was given them, he sought fresh horses in the stables of the market-place, and passing over the bridge, issued forth again from the town of Meaux.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

If in this earth in which we live, and this state of mortal being, a foretaste of that hell which evil actions prepare for men hereafter, be allowed to visit the bosoms of the wicked, it must surely be when, in the struggle against virtue and right, they find themselves baffled and overthrown; when they see that holy obedience to God's high will, which they contemned as pusillanimous or scoffed at as feeble, triumphing, in the power of wisdom and the might of justice, over their furious weakness and their foolish cunning.

That foretaste of hell was in the heart of William Caillet, when, after having been dashed backward among his bloodthirsty followers by the hand of the youth he affected to scorn and despise, he was led away from the southern tower of the castle of Beaumont, bleeding, dizzy, and baffled.

Ere he could recover his recollection, Jacques Morne and another had drawn him not only away from the tower, but to a considerable distance from the fortress itself, out of the reach of the missiles which from time to time were poured from the walls. The peasantry gazed at him, as he moved slowly along, with anxiety and wonder. This was the first time that they had ever seen him wounded; and as his fiery courage had led him into the very front on every occasion of danger and strife, they had become possessed with a superstitious notion that he was invulnerable. His superiority of mind, his powers of language, his fierce daring, the calm, deliberate cruelty with which he committed or ordered barbarous acts, which the others performed when maddened by excited passions, his continual success, and his thirst, as it were, for strife and bloodshed, had all convinced them that he was of a different kind of being from themselves; and, as there is always some justice in the appreciation of character by multitudes, however rude, the revolted peasantry imagined that their leader, if not absolutely a fiend, was endowed by the spirits of darkness with supernatural powers.

As Caillet recovered, in some degree, from the first effects of the blow, he saw the dismayed and wondering eyes that turned upon him; and feeling that, unless he made a great effort, a part of the influence of his character would be lost with the people, he exclaimed, in his short, stern manner, "No farther!" and pushing from him on either side the men who were supporting him, he drew himself to his full height, and spreading out his shoulders, took in a deep, long breath.

The next moment, feeling that his strength was indeed gone for the time, he sat down upon the ground to hide his weakness, and in a full and yet powerful voice said to Jacques Morne, "Take off my casque; bring me a bucket full of water."

The casque was soon removed; and looking at the deep rent through the steel, as he held it on his knee, without attempting to stop the blood that continued

flowing from his forehead, he continued to those around, "The blade must have been enchanted that struck that blow. The tower, however, is ours. I knew that something must be paid for it, and it is well worth a few drops of blood. Let it flow, let it flow," he continued, removing the hand of one of the men who attempted to stanch it with some bandages of linen which had been brought to the spot: "when enough has come, I will stop it myself. Did not somebody tell me, when I came up a few hours ago, that old Thibalt had been wounded by an arrow last night?"

"Yes," replied one of the men, with a sarcastic grin; "and he caused himself to be removed to a hut a mile or two behind, where he had laid a trap for the old Lord of St. Leu and the Lady Margaret, whom he intends to keep for his paramour."

"If he can think of paramours," answered Caillet, "he cannot be badly hurt, and must come up to-morrow to bear his share in the day's work. I intend to take the castle before noon. We have done enough for one day. Now, Morne, dip the bandages in the water; bind them round my head. Withdraw the men a little distance from the walls, as the sun is going down; but mind that they keep close together, and lie shoulder to shoulder through the night, that we may have no more escaping, as at Ermenonville. I will go to yon cottage, and have an hour or two's sleep. I have had none for many a day. Come with me, Morne, for a while: I would speak to you as we go. I expect great tidings and great deeds to-morrow, my friends," he continued, turning to the peasantry who stood near; "and if my mind does not deceive me, I shall lead you to a higher enterprise than any you have yet undertaken. Wake me if anything happens, or if any messenger arrives; and an hour before daylight send a messenger to old Thibalt, bidding him come up by dawn."

Thus saying, Caillet turned and walked away, proceeding with a firm, strong step, an upright mien, and unchanged demeanour, till he had passed the greater part of the peasantry. He then, however, took Jacques Morne's arm, leaned heavily upon it, and when he had reached the cottage, he cast himself down in a bed, in the right-hand room, with a deep groan.

"What can I get you, Caillet?" said Jacques Morne: "you are badly hurt."

"No, no," he replied, "I am not. I shall be well to-morrow: my head aches with the blow, that is all. Bring me plenty of water to keep these bandages wet. Put a man to guard the door. Let me hear everything that happens during the night; and now leave me."

It was about two o'clock in the morning, when Caillet, who had at length fallen asleep, was roused by some one bringing him in letters. A torch was soon procured, and he read the contents eagerly, and with a smile of triumph. Then turning to the messenger, he said, "You come from Paris yourself?"

The man bowed his head; and Caillet continued, "Well, take some short rest. Go back and tell Vailant and Giles that I will not fail them. I will be there to a moment, with twenty thousand men. I have no materials here, or I would write; but you know what to say, and will say it exactly."

The messenger retired; and Caillet asked those who had brought him in, whether anything had occurred in the neighbourhood of the castle.

"Nothing," replied the man: "nothing could happen. There is no room for a mouse to creep out of it between our men. They discharged a flight of arrows, indeed, about midnight; but without effect."

Caillet started up off the bed, and gazed in the face of the man who spoke. "A flight of arrows at midnight!" he exclaimed; "that was not without its purpose. We shall hear more anon. Where lies Jacques Morne? Bring the casque after me; but stay, give me a cup of wine."

While the peasant was seeking in the other chamber of the cottage for the wine that Caillet demanded, there were voices heard at the door, and the insurgent leader went out himself to see who it was.

"Here is bad news, Caillet," said Jacques Morne, who was one of the speakers. "Old Thibault is dead!"

"Then death be his paramour!" cried Caillet, with a bitter and a somewhat wild laugh. "What had the old dry lath to do with paramours? I wonder if his inquisitive mind have found the way to hell yet? It was no bad hand that shot that arrow. That old man would have made mischief among us, Morne. He could not be honest even with his brethren."

"It was not the arrow killed him," replied Morne, in a low tone. "There was a dagger wound in his heart;

and a horse-boy, who was found dying, said that there had been several women and five or six men there, mounted on strong horses. They stabbed old Thibalt, and cut the boy's throat, it seems; but he is still living, if you would ask him any farther questions. I fear, Caillet, that they have escaped from the castle; for the boy heard one of them call another Albert Denyn, and they spoke about going to Meaux: yet how they got out I cannot tell; for, on my life, they must have marched across our bodies."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Caillet, with a wild, fiendish, mocking laugh: "they will make me hunt them throughout all France; but so shall we find the richer castles and towns to plunder, and the more of these locust nobles to destroy. Meaux, gone to Meaux, have they? Well, then, we will go to Meaux too. Go, go, Morne, go! Gather all the people together where I can speak to them. Get the men of influence in the front. I have great news for them, Morne; so let the tidings of the principal people having escaped from the castle spread among them. I will be there by daybreak."

As soon as Morne was gone, Caillet quaffed off the cup of wine that the peasant brought him; and then sitting down, leaned his head upon his hands, muttering to himself, "How it aches! Nor are my thoughts so clear as they used to be. I wonder why images that one would banish will return to plague us. I, who can command thousands of men, cannot I command these phantoms, these creatures of my own brain? That old man! that Walleran Urgel, that I slew in the wood! that daughter of the Lord of Plessis, that I spurned away from me to the bloodhounds that followed! and the little children, too! I can see them standing, pale, at the other side of the room. How she did shriek when the men seized her! Hark, she is shrieking still! No! all is silence. The cry was in my own heart!"

"But this is phrensy," he continued; "I will go forth: the cool air will calm my brain. See, there is the gray morning! Hark ye without there, bring my casque after me, and a lance;" and thus saying, he wandered forth with his eyes bent upon the ground.

As soon as the sun had fully risen, a large body of the peasantry had been gathered together upon the slope descending from the castle. They were not all there,

although William Caillet had demanded that all should be collected; but it was in vain, with the mixed, undisciplined, many-passioned crowd, without any law, or recognised authority whatever, to attempt a universal movement. General impulses might be given, carrying a great majority in a particular way; but the leaders had always found that there were numbers, not absolutely dissentient, but who straggled away to some other object, in spite of all that could be done to keep them together.

Such, then, was the case on the present occasion. Some fifteen or sixteen thousand men were collected, however; and among them, all those who generally led the rest, receiving their directions from Caillet himself. Some standing, some sitting, some lying on the grass, now waited for his coming with not a little impatience; for the tidings had been spread among them that the principal persons who had been in the castle of Beaumont on the preceding day had made their escape during the night, and also that some great enterprise was about to be proposed to them. They had just arrived at that period of the insurrection when the first ardour of their furious outbreak began to die away, and some new stimulus, some great object, was wanting to call forth again the same terrible energies which they had at first displayed.

At length there came a murmur from the side of the castle next to the gate, and in a minute Caillet appeared among them; the impression of his presence being rather heightened than diminished by the sternness of his pale and dark, but magnificent countenance, and by the bloody bandages that wrapped his brow.

He paused and looked around him in silence for a moment, and then said, "My friends, you have heard that the prey have escaped us for the time. I know not how, and it matters but little."

"We have discovered how, we have discovered how," cried half a dozen voices. "We have traced the horses' feet from a cave hidden by the gorse and bushes there; but there are still men in the castle."

"It matters not," replied Caillet. "Those who made it worth taking are gone. You have heard that they have escaped, I say; but there is one thing that you have not heard—that they have escaped only to fall again into our hands with greater certainty than ever."

There were some of you that feared, there were some of you that doubted, when I told you that our very first success would bring millions to aid and support us in breaking our chains and crushing our enemies. What I have told you has now proved true : all your best hopes are fulfilled. The people of Paris, I mean the oppressed people of Paris, not only offer to join you, but call you to take part with them in a great enterprise ; and the commune of another important city, with the mayor and magistrates at its head, offer to receive you as brothers, to give up the place to you, and to enable you at one blow to crush the whole brood of serpents that have poisoned France. This is more than I ever dreamed or hoped for. My friends, my dear fellow-countrymen, John Soulas, mayor of Meaux, offers to receive us and our Parisian brethren, under Vaillant and Giles, into that great and important city. You will ask, perhaps, what is the advantage of that ? There are some, indeed, who may think it will be enough to plunder the rich houses of the nobles therein ; to sack the king's palace ; to break into the many convents and abbeys it contains. But I tell you, all this is nothing, in comparison with that which our entrance into Meaux will afford us. Listen, and mark me. Shut up in the market-place of that town, and the buildings that surround it, are the Duchess of Normandy, the young wife of the regent, Isabel of France, the regent's sister, a young and lovely woman, with two hundred others of the highest ladies of the land of France. They have none to defend or help them : they are in our power ; they are at our mercy. Wealth, too, and jewels in abundance, are there, and those who have fled from this castle have madly directed their course thither. Here are the letters of the mayor inviting us ; here are the letters of Vaillant and his friends beseeching us to join them. It is for you, you, my friends, to say what shall be done. Speak ! shall we continue the siege of this castle of Beaumont, or shall I instantly lead you to Meaux ?"

"To Meaux, to Meaux !" shouted a thousand voices. "Lead us to Meaux, brave Caillet !"

"We will have princes for our wives and concubines," said one.

"We will not keep them long," answered another.

"The dagger can soon cut such marriage vows,"

cried Caillet, with the sneer upon his lip. "Is it to Meaux, then?"

"To Meaux, to Meaux!" again exclaimed the multitude.

"Well, then," continued Caillet, "let us not pause a moment. Bring me a horse, and I am ready as I stand. Let a few remain here to blockade this place, that the men therein issue not forth to cut off the stragglers. Let others follow after, who are encumbered with their baggage or their wealth; but all that are young, and active, and daring, follow me without delay."

Ere half an hour was over, a great part of the immense multitudes which had been gathered together under the walls of Beaumont was in movement towards Meaux. A new impetus was given to them, and they rushed on like famished tigers, either for blood or crime. It was night when they reached the town; and such was their impatient confidence, that, on finding the gates shut, it was with difficulty Caillet restrained them from attempting to storm the place. They spread themselves, however, through the smaller houses scattered about in the fields and on the banks of the river; and many a bright flame rising up from the country for miles round Meaux, told of the scenes of devastation and violence that were taking place.

At the demand of the insurgent leader, the mayor himself came early on the following morning to one of the wickets to speak with him who had already made himself such a meteor-like reputation for wonderful as well as horrible deeds. Caillet asked him but few questions, and those in a tone of authority and power that made the magistrate shrink, overawed, before him. The first demand was, would the citizens throw open their gates to receive him, as had been promised, or should he open a passage through the walls, which would give him and his party speedy admission to the city.

The mayor replied in humble tone, That not only would the gates be very soon cast wide to admit him, but that he would quickly see with what joy the people were ready to welcome him.

Caillet's last question was, "Did any of the fugitives from Beaumont enter Meaux to-day?" and, on hearing a full account of the arrival of the duchess and her party, he muttered to himself, "Now, Adela de Mauviet, now!"

Till nine o'clock all entrances of the town remained closed, and it was with difficulty that Caillet restrained the Jacques; but at that hour the gates were thrown open, and the mayor himself appeared on horseback, to usher the leaders in. Shouts and acclamations rang through the air, and it required no slight exertion to maintain a degree of order and regularity, as the peasantry were led into the city through the various narrow streets, and were directed in masses towards the wide open space which fronted the bridge leading to the market-place.

There, new shouts burst upon the air when the rude multitude found large tables spread for them in the midst of the streets, groaning with abundance, and the townsmen of Meaux in arms ready to provide everything they might want at their repast.

In the same place appeared likewise some fifteen hundred of the citizens of Paris under the two insurgent chiefs, Giles and Vaillant; and many were the smooth congratulations which the would-be polite Parisians poured forth upon Caillet as he rode on by the side of the mayor. But the stern, dark leader of the peasants' revolt replied to them very briefly, yet in words which, even accustomed as their ears were to a higher sort of eloquence than the country-people ever heard, struck and astonished them, and at once taught them that they had come there to be led, not to lead.

Caillet stood by, while the peasants devoured the food that had been prepared for them, glancing his eyes from the walls and towers of the market-place on the other side of the Marne to his rude followers, and muttering to himself, "I must allow them to sate one beast's appetite before I lead the wolves to gratify another. This place is stronger than I thought," he said aloud, speaking to the Parisians and the mayor. "It will take us two days to reduce it, if there be many men therein."

"Two days!" cried the mayor; "more than that, good sir, though there be not a score of men within the place."

Caillet gazed at him with a scornful smile. "Why," he replied, "it is the work of a carpenter to take it! It needs no general. Have you no boats or ladders? This bridge, indeed, they can defend. But give me boats and ladders, and we will be in that market square

within an hour. They must be made, I know. But that can well be done in two days, as I have said."

"And yet, my good friend," answered the mayor, speaking to him in a low voice, that the rest of those around might not hear, "did I not understand you rightly, that there is a lady in the place whom you would fain reserve to yourself from less scrupulous hands? The same is the case with me. If we assault the wall at many points, who can tell where the entrance will first be made. If we attack the gate alone—"

"You are right," said Caillet: "we will attack the gate; but it shall not require more time either to take the place. What carpenters have you here? Let them be brought: with planks, and heavy beams of wood, we will soon shatter that gate to atoms, and have a fair way in."

Carpenters were accordingly called forward; beams and planks were procured; and under the direction and continual superintendence of Caillet, one of the vast and powerful machines was commenced, which in those days supplied the place of cannon. The construction proceeded with great rapidity; and the insurgents, heavy with wine and meat, gathered round the spot where the carpenters were labouring, and viewed their progress with surprise and admiration. But their wonder was still more excited by Caillet's knowledge and skill, he alone, of all the persons present, being able to direct the workmen in what they had to do. The rude Jacques gazed and muttered, commenting upon every part of the work; and though they knew, generally, that the object of the machine was to drive down the walls or burst open the gates, much did they marvel at many of the things they saw, asking each other, "What is that for? What is that to do?" and still they turned their eyes to Caillet, who stood stern and dark, giving no explanation to any one, but ordering with clear precision everything that was to be done.

"I believe he is something more than a man," said one of the peasants.

"I think he is the devil himself," murmured another.

"I have heard," answered a third, "that his sword cuts through an enemy without his ever moving an arm."

"Joachim Verger, who was there when he killed Antoine the robber," whispered another, "told me that his blade gave but one wave, and the fellow's head rolled along the ground like a dropped pippin."

"He can read and write," said the person who had first spoken, "which is more than half the lords of the land can do; and where he got such knowledge, unless from the devil, I do not know."

Such was the conversation among one of the many groups of Jacques who wandered through the town of Meaux. It was a curious thing to see the different effects which their appearance in the city produced upon the citizens themselves, according to their various characters. There were some who had shut up and barred their houses, covered their windows over with planks, and blocked up the staircases that led to the higher stories. There were others, a great deal more frightened than these at the presence of the Jacques in Meaux, who nevertheless stood at their own doors, with faces full of forced and fearful smiles, shaking hands with the rude peasantry, or offering them wine and hydromel. There were priests and monks who led them into the church or the convent; and, while in their hearts they were giving them to eternal condemnation, called down with loud voices the blessings of God upon them, and prayed for success to their holy cause. In short, all the hypocrisy of fear was enacted with various grimaces in different parts of the town of Meaux.

But there were other places where the Jacques were in truth willingly received, and where the poorer sort of artisans—those who were either driven to despair by unmerited poverty, or those who were reduced to it by vice, by debauchery, and bad conduct—halloed on the fierce insurgents from the country, and excited them with the thought of the lewd horrors of the ensuing day, when they should have broken into the marketplace of Meaux, and torn the victims it contained from their only place of refuge.

During this time, however, the machine which was to batter down the gate proceeded rapidly, and ere night fell was wellnigh complete. The news spread through the people that at daybreak the next morning the attack would commence; and each man prepared himself—sitting at the doors and in the streets, where tables were spread for them—with gluttony and drunkenness, for the brief strife and the brutal gratification of the following day.

In the mean while, however, Caillet, Soulas, Vaillant,

and Giles, held counsel together, of a kind which, perhaps, might not altogether have pleased their followers, had they been able to hear it. They parted beforehand the principal captives among them: each claimed his choice of one, or perhaps two, of the fair unhappy beings who remained trembling within those walls. Soulas and Caillet were animated by individual passion, and each named the woman that was to fall to his share; but the other two were mad with crime and folly, and had wellnigh quarrelled as to who should seize upon the young wife of the regent. Vaillant, however, contented himself at last with the Duchess of Orleans; and all that remained to be settled was the means of securing to themselves, in the midst of such a scene as was to ensue, the captives they had thus appropriated. Every one, however, had, or fancied he had, a certain number of devoted followers who would obey his will. Soulas had a guard at his disposal; Vaillant and Giles boasted how many they could command; but Caillet only said, "No one disobeys me twice!"

Ere he lay down to rest, he sent for Jacques Morne, and spoke with him long. The man was but the slave of his will, and ended by saying, "Oh ay, Caillet, oh ay, Caillet: there are plenty of people from about Beauvois that know her, and will help me willingly enough. I will answer for saving her, if you do not get hold of her first yourself, only I bargain to kill all the rest as I find them. I care not for women; and, as you said yourself one day, we must crush the dams, if we would have no more young vipers bred to sting us."

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## CHAPTER XIX.

It was night; and Albert Denyn and the stout soldier Scroope sat by the fireside of the good Curé Dacy; while his niece, with her eye sparkling with pleasure to render any service to him who had so greatly contributed to her deliverance, poured out, from one of those large leathern bottles then in use, some choice wine, which her uncle had brought forth to refresh the weary travellers after their long and hard day's ride.

At every village through which they had passed, Albert Denyn had inquired for the troop of the Captal de Buch; and as such a celebrated leader was not likely to cross the country unnoticed, he concluded, from all he heard, that his noble friend had not yet arrived. The fear that he might not appear in time, and thus disappoint one of his chief hopes for the deliverance of those he loved, saddened the young soldier, and threw him into deep fits of thought; and imagination tormented him with apprehensions for Adela and her father.

"Poor as I am," cried Albert, at length, "I would give a purse of gold to have tidings to-morrow morning either from Beaumont or from Meaux."

"Rest, rest, my son," replied the curé, "and trust in God: He brings deliverance when we least expect it. Finish thy supper, and then to bed: thy horses shall be well cared for; and if you must needs part at daybreak to-morrow, they will not go unfed. Drink another cup of wine, worthy trooper," he continued, speaking to Scroope. "It was for such occasions as these that wine was given to man."

"By my faith, good father," answered Scroope, "I think it is for every occasion. I do not know the time or the circumstances in which wine does not do my heart good: it's the best of all liquors, bating beer. Good barley beer, that some folks call ale, is worth all the other liquors in the world put together."

Ere long, Albert Denyn and the trooper retired to rest; but there were people on foot in the curé's house all night; and he himself returned upon his mule, as from a long ride, at the hour of three in the morning.

"I have been able to get no intelligence, my child," he said to his niece, who was waiting in the passage to receive him. "There is a rumour of a bad man, named Peter Giles, having marched from Paris, with some men-at-arms, towards the town of Meaux; but whether to attack or defend it, no one could tell. Has the man returned from Beaumont? but that is impossible; he has not had time."

Shortly after, the step of Albert Denyn was heard upon the stairs, and he and Scroope prepared instantly to set out.

"Whither do you turn your steps first, my sons?" asked the curé.

"To Provins, my good father," replied Albert Denyn:

"there we part, and one of us goes to Monterreux, while the other speeds away towards the frontier."

The old man made no answer, but gave them his benediction, and let them depart.

The two horsemen rode on till the middle of the day; but they were then obliged to halt, in order to refresh their horses. As soon as the beasts had taken some food, they were brought out again; and Albert Denyn had his foot in the stirrup, when the sound of a trumpet was heard, and shortly after, over a gentle slope in the road, at about the distance of a quarter of a mile, some fluttering pennons and two broad banners were seen rising in the air.

"The captal, as I live!" exclaimed Albert Denyn; "but whose can be that other banner? Or a pale gules?"

"That?" answered Scroope; "why you should know it better than I do! it is the device of the Count of Foix. I saw it often in Perigueux. It gave us some trouble at times."

Albert Denyn spurred on, and in a minute or two more sprang to the ground by the side of the captal's horse. The eagerness of his countenance, and the few first words that he spoke, made the great leader instantly halt his little troop, while the principal persons present gathered round him.

"What news from Paris? What news of this Jacquerie we hear of? What news of the King of Navarre?"

"Bad from all quarters, I fear," replied Albert Denyn.

"The King of Navarre and the dauphin are at open war; the Parisians are in revolt; the Jacques are slaughtering the nobles throughout the land. But, my lord captal," he continued, "I came hither seeking you at full speed. I have an adventure for you, fair sir, which you will not fail to undertake. My good Lord of Mauvinet, with but a handful of men, is shut up in the castle of Beaumont, some thirty leagues hence, by the Jacques of Brie."

"How many are there against him?" demanded the captal.

"I cannot justly say," replied Albert Denyn: "were they regular troops one might judge, but they are merely a wild multitude, certainly more than twenty thousand men."

"And we have five-and-twenty, noble count," replied the captal, turning towards the Count de Foix. "Well,  
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Albert, now tell me two things. How long can the good lord hold out? and is the Lady Adela with him?"

"The count can keep the castle, I should judge, two or three days," replied the young soldier, "a week at the utmost. But we can raise men, my lord. I am sure that from some of the neighbouring castles we can gain assistance. As for the Lady Adela," and the colour came up into his cheek, while the keen eye of the captal rested firmly upon him, "she is in Meaux, in not much greater safety than her father. The Duchess of Orleans and herself resolved to make their escape from Beaumont, and I, with some others, were sent to guard them to Meaux, where it was supposed the regent might be found. None of the royal family was there, however, when we arrived, but the Duchess of Normandy; and with her some sixty or seventy of the highest ladies in France, I was told, but scarcely enough men-at-arms to play sentinel on the battlements of the market-place. The citizens are disaffected, it seems; the ladies are terrified at their situation; and I came away with the purpose of either going to Monterreau, or sending this good fellow to the dauphin for the purpose of calling him back to Meaux, with what troops he may have at his command."

"Better go yourself, Albert," said the captal: "you may gain a high reward, while we raise men, and ride on to Beaumont."

"No, my lord," replied Albert, "by your good leave, I will go with you to Beaumont: Scroope, here, can carry the message to the dauphin, and win the guerdon."

"Well, then, forward, my good friend," said the captal, addressing Scroope: "do you know the message and the road?"

"Both, both, sir," answered Scroope, passing on, "and I will not miss the reward for want of the spur."

"Come, Albert, with us, then," continued the captal, "and tell us more of those sad events as we go. Will France never be at peace?"

"God forbid that there should be peace for any length of time!" cried the Count de Foix. "War is the occupation of a gentleman; and what should we do, captal, if all the world were to agree to remain slobbering in furred gowns? But as for the Jacques, I have no notion of the villains taking the trade out of our hands. Plunder is a part of our especial privileges, captal; and we must not let mere peasants share with us."

He spoke laughingly, and with a certain degree of sarcastic bitterness; for there was not wanting even in those days, among the nobles themselves, a perception of the vices of their social state; although they would have sooner given up life itself than that curious mixture of fierce and gentle, cruel and generous pursuits, which formed the chivalrous occupation of the day.

The captal, without pausing, rode on for about ten miles past the little inn where Albert had stopped to refresh his horses, and at length drew in the rein at a small place called Tonquin, intending to pass the night there: it was but a hamlet, but at that time a populous one. The castles of several nobles were seen rising round; the Jacquerie had not, as yet, infected the peasantry; and besides finding ample accommodation for their men in the cottages around, the captal and the Count de Foix trusted to obtain there such an accession of strength from the castles of Coulommiers, Ville-neuve, Rosoy, and from the height near Jouy, which was then crowned by one of the finest chateaus in the country, as to enable them to attempt the relief of Beaumont with some certainty of success.

The evening meal was soon spread; the captal and the count took their places at the head of the table; their followers ranged themselves on either side, keeping due distinction of rank; and with the light-hearted spirit of the day, they laughed, and joked, and drank, as if there were no such things as bloodshed, and murder, and civil contentions, in all the world.

"Why, Albert, where got you that string of pearls?" demanded the captal, at length. "The gold chain, I know, was the emperor's gift, but that must have been from the hand of some fair lady, surely."

"It was given me, beau sire, by the Duchess of Orleans," replied Albert Denyn, "as a reward for guarding her from Paris to Beaumont; and she, moreover, promised me, if I carried it through the midst of the Jacques, to ask knighthood for me from the hand of the dauphin himself."

"There was never anything like his luck," said Bassot de Mauleon, one of the gentlemen attached to the Captal de Buch: "he seems to fall in with every good thing that is going!"

"Because he is always in the saddle to seek them, Bassot," replied the captal. "Why, you might have

won the gold chain the emperor gave him, for you set out together; only you stayed to make love to a pretty girl in a village on the Danube, and lost the reward."

"But I won the girl," cried Mauleon, "and that was better of the two. Yet it must be owned, he is a lucky man."

"He will be more lucky still, before he has done," said the captal.

"Fortune is conduct," observed the Count de Foix; "but I suppose, young gentleman, you look upon yourself in a state to claim the duchess's promise; for if I understood you rightly, you guarded her safely to Meaux from Beaumont, when the castle was besieged by the Jacques."

"No, no, my lord," replied Albert Denyn, "such was not her meaning, and I would never dare claim knight-hood upon such a ground. If I carry the trinket through the villains, sword in hand, in the open day, it may be considered as something, but our escape from Beaumont was made by secret ways, and in the darkness of the night."

"Well," said the captal, "we must not linger long over our food; for, with my good will, to-morrow evening shall find us under the walls of Beaumont. We will send messengers immediately to the lords of Jouy, Villeneuve, and Rosoy; and with the first gleam of light, if they send us any re-enforcements, we will be upon our way to deliver my good Lord of Mauvinet. Mauleon, you shall go to Jouy, and beseech the châtelain to give us his company on this—

"Noble gentlemen," said the aubergiste, entering, "here is a priest without, asking to speak with one of you, named Denyn; and if he be not here, with the noble Captal de Buch."

"Why, Albert," cried the captal, "what do you do with a priest? Are you going to make confession before you are hanged?"

"Your pardon, noble sirs," urged the aubergiste, "but the good priest is very earnest for instant admission. He says the matter is of life and death."

"Send him in, send him in, then," exclaimed the captal; and at the same moment Albert Denyn started up and advanced towards the door. Before he reached it, however, the good priest Dacy entered the room, with a face very pale, and a dress soiled with dust and hard riding.

"My son," he said, grasping the young soldier's hand, "you were eager for tidings from Beaumont and from Meaux; I bring you both. Beaumont is wellnigh free; the Jacques have decamped from it, leaving only enough to keep the garrison in. But, alas for Meaux! the mayor and the people have thrown open the gates to the villeins; the rabble of Paris have joined them; they are even now attacking the market-place, where are collected all the noblest ladies in France, almost without defence."

Albert struck his hand against his forehead, forgetting all restraint in the agony of the moment.

"She will be lost! she will be lost!" he exclaimed. "My beautiful, my beloved! and I not there to die for her!"

The powerful hand of the captal was laid upon his shoulder. "Fear not, dear boy," he said; and then turning to the rest, added, in a loud voice, "Give my banner to the wind! Every foot into the stirrup! Greilly to the rescue! and shame upon him who will not follow to deliver the ladies of France!"

Albert turned and grasped his hand; but the captal stopped him. "Not a word, not a word!" he cried. "We go to great deeds, Albert, which will make our names immortal whether we live or die. By Heaven! my cousin of Foix, I would rather have this opportunity of marching, with five-and-twenty men, to deliver the ladies of France from an army of villeins, than wear the crown of any realm in Christendom. What say you, my men! is not this glorious fortune?"

A shout was the reply; and, ere half an hour was over, the gallant little band was on its way to Meaux.

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## CHAPTER X.

THE waiting for deliverance! It is a terrible thing, wherever we put our trust or hope, if that hope be of earth. Ay, it is a terrible thing, even when our hope is from heaven; for unto all of us, from one end of the world to the other, might be addressed the often-repeated reproach of the Redeemer, that we are of but

little faith. However strong may be our conviction of God's mercy and tenderness, of his unwillingness to punish, of his readiness to forgive, of the omniscience of his wisdom, and the omnipotence of his power, the weak spirit of man will still tremble, and doubt, and fear; will shrink from each painful trial, whatever be the object, and think the deliverance long and tardy, even while he continues to hope that it will come. But how often is it with us, that hope itself goes out; that, looking round and calculating all the chances and probabilities of human aid, we see none on any side; that all assistance from any being on the earth seems impossible, and blasphemous fear even whispers a doubt that God himself can help us?

The situation of those within the market-place of Meaux might well produce in their minds the utmost pitch of despair; when, on the night after Albert Denyn had left them, and heard the shouts of the wild and furious multitude that poured down to the banks of the Marne, and when they saw rising up through the country round the flames of houses, and cottages, and hamlets mingling with the blaze of watch-fires and the glare of torches. It was by these terrible signs they first learned that the Jacquerie were under the walls of Meaux.

Little sleep had any one that night, though many there present needed it greatly; and by those on the walls could be heard, till a late hour, the shrieks and cries, as well as the sounds, of revelry and rude merriment, which rose up from the fields round the city. Many was the anxious consultation; many the fruitless inquiry as to when the message could reach the dauphin, and as to how long the place could be held out; many the bitter murmurings and keen reproaches with which they loaded the name of Soulas, the treacherous mayor of Meaux, and the faithless citizens, to whose courage and truth the ladies of France had been committed. Often, too, during the night, some timid girl, who at any other time would have feared to have set her foot at that hour beyond the precincts of her paternal dwelling, stole up to the unguarded battlements to listen for the sounds that she dreaded to hear, and scan the darkness with an eager eye, lest the ruffians by whom she was surrounded should take advantage of the obscurity to steal upon them unperceived.

But of all within those walls, there was none so sad, there was none so apprehensive, as poor Adela de Mauvinet; for she had not alone to ask herself what might be her own fate the next moment, but she had bitterly to inquire, without the power of obtaining any certain answer, what might be the condition of her beloved father at that very time. Would the multitude of Jacquerie have quitted Beaumont, she asked herself, without having taken the castle? and as her heart replied to the question but too sadly, tears as for the dead rolled over her fair cheeks.

There were but two other beings to whom she was attached on earth, her younger brother and Albert Denyn. That the former was safe, she thanked God, but, as she did so, she added in her own mind, "I shall never behold him more." It must be owned, however, that it was to the companion of her childhood, the friend of her youth, her deliverer from danger and from worse than death, her lover, her best beloved, that her thoughts turned most eagerly. What would be his feelings, she asked, when he returned to Meaux, and found the place of their refuge in the power of the unsparing, sanguinary, barbarous multitude: what would be his anguish when he learned that she had fallen into the brutal hands of him from whom he had once saved her, and when he could not know to what horrors she might be subjected before death delivered her.

She thought of him, and she grieved for his agony; but Adela judged, and judged rightly, that Albert would not long survive her, and something like hope and joy sprung up again in her mind as she said to herself, "It was impossible we ever could be united on earth; but now, though our bridal be a bloody one, we shall soon be united in heaven."

From time to time the contemplation of her own fate, too, pressed heavily upon her. "What would she herself do?" she asked. "How should she herself act? Was she bound by any religious tie to suffer dishonour, rather than to seek death?" and she tried to call up again to memory all that she knew of the word of Truth, in order to gain some rule for her conduct, and to justify, if possible, to her own mind, the last terrible act of maiden purity. The legends of her church supplied her with manifold examples of such conduct; but still she shrunk from the idea of suicide. "Would they but

kill me !” she thought, “ would they but kill me ! Yet surely woman, though she be weak, has a right to defend herself to the last. There are not men enough to guard the walls, or to protect us and themselves, if the villeins break in. Why should we not take what arms we can get ? Why should we not aid to defend ourselves ? Why should we not, as a last resource, drive them to slay us, by resistance even unto death ? Then the whole sin and crime would be theirs ; we shall die unpolluted ; and the weight of the murder will rest heavy upon them.”

To a night of agitation and fear succeeded a day of terror and dismay. The young Duchess of Normandy and her companions gathered themselves together in the midst of the market-place, not to consult as much as to lament ; and the dark and anxious countenances of the few men that were with them—countenances in which there was no hope—served but to dispirit them the more. Each told the other how she had spent the hours, the sad thoughts, the fearful visions, the dark imaginations that had possessed them.

There was not a word of courage or energy among them, till Adela related what had been passing in her mind ; and it was strange to hear that sweet and gentle voice proposing high deeds to women like herself, in defence of their honour and their purity ; and to see the fair and beautiful beings around her roused into ardour and eagerness by her example, and with renewed courage seeking for those arms which their hands were but little accustomed to wield.

“ We can but die,” they exclaimed, “ we can but die ; and it is better to die by any other hands than our own.”

A faint, sad smile came over the countenance of the young Lord of Chamblé as he heard their determination.

“ I never thought to fall,” he said, “ with such fair companions in arms ; but I fear we can make no great resistance, and my fate will be soon decided. If, therefore, you are determined upon your conduct—and I cannot but applaud the purpose—take the lightest weapons that you can get. I saw some crossbows, with which the pages learn to aim their quarrels ; these, with daggers, and short swords, and knives, very weak hands can use ; and as what you seek is, alas ! but death in the end, you may well draw it down upon your heads

from the enemy, if you employ such arms with determination."

While he was yet speaking, a messenger came to call him to the gate tower; and after a few minutes' absence, he returned, saying, "I know not what these treacherous communes are doing. They are laying out tables in the streets, as if for some great festival."

The matter was speedily explained, however. The sight of the Jacques pouring in soon brought all the men-at-arms to the walls. The pages joined them to make the greater show; and to the honour of those within the market-place of Meaux, let it be remembered that not the lowest person there present, not the serving-man, who never raised his ambition higher than perhaps to groom the horse of the knight, where he before groomed the horse of the squire, who did not now swear to die willingly for the ladies of France, and to spend the last drop of his blood to protect them.

Anxiously the women remained behind, with sinking hearts and trembling limbs, but still resolved and prepared. The suspense, however, proved too much for endurance; and at the end of an hour, one of the boldest ventured up to the top of the wall, to ascertain what was taking place.

"They seem to be constructing a machine for battering down the gates," said the Lord of Chamblé, in reply to her questions. "If so, it must be to-morrow, or the next day, before they begin the attack."

"Thank God, thank God!" cried the lady; "then we may yet be saved."

"Monterreau is far off," answered the Lord of Chamblé, sadly. "The messenger knew not that the danger was so pressing; the dauphin, I find, had but three hundred men with him; and there are many thousands within sight of this gate. Not only the villain peasants, but men-at-arms, I see, with banners; probably the commons of Paris. Take not hold of a foolish hope, lady: I feel upon my heart that weight which tells me we are to die here, and soon."

During the rest of the day after this brief conversation, pages were sent down from time to time to tell the princesses and their companions what was taking place in the town, as far as those on the gate tower could discover; but the delay of the attack was an aggravation rather than a relief. It wore out and ex-

hausted the energies of the hearts within those walls ; it made the interval like the agony of a prolonged death ; and by the time that night came there was more than one of the ladies there present who proposed not to wait for the attack, but to destroy themselves together, and at once. Some, however, clung to the last hope of life, and their voices prevailed to stay the rash act.

Towards sunset, the young Lord of Chamblé came down for a few moments to take some refreshment ; and when the Duchess of Normandy asked him at what time he thought the attack would commence, he replied, " Early to-morrow morning, lady, if not during the darkness. The engine they are making has been constructed with incredible rapidity ; and a few hours more of daylight will enable them to complete it, even if they do not go on by torchlight. We must remain upon the walls all night, and show lights here and there, to deceive them : they evidently think that we are ten times more numerous than we are, otherwise they would have scaled the walls at twenty points long ere this."

" Had we not better, then, spread round the battlements ourselves," said the Duchess of Normandy, " and keep up fires, and carry torches during the night ? they cannot see whether we are men or women ; and if we can but intimidate them for a time, my husband may come up."

" You can do so, if you please," replied the young knight, sadly ; " but some of you had better sleep, while some keep the walls. Then, as to to-morrow, if you still hold your resolution, and think there is no chance of these men sparing you, when I go up to the tower I will order the small gate in the palisade behind to be fastened up. There is no need for us to leave ourselves a retreat ; and you will have then some defence, which will oblige them to—"

" Butcher us without dishonouring us, you would say, my lord," added the Duchess of Orleans, as the young knight left the sentence unfinished. " Well, dear niece, you and I will be captain of the two bands who watch the walls, and rest by turns. As I am brave, I will have some coward for my lieutenant ; and as you are cowardly, you shall have our sweet Adela for yours, for she comes of a brave race."

There is nothing so sad as when mirth mingles with

misery; and tears rose in the young duchess's eyes as she heard her fair relation's words. The night, however, passed as had been appointed; and throughout those hours of darkness bands of noble ladies and fair girls patrolled the beleaguered walls, armed with such light weapons as they could wield, and trembling as they went.

The Duchess of Normandy had returned to the house she inhabited about an hour, when daylight began to dawn; and looking up, she said to Adela de Mauvinet, who was lying at her feet, "I wish, dear girl, you would go to the walls, and look out on the road that leads towards Fontenoy. Perhaps the dauphin may be coming. God of heaven! this is very terrible, not to know that one has half an hour to live. Take some one with you, and go, Adela."

"I fear not! I will go alone, madam," replied the young Lady of Mauvinet. "Look how yon poor thing is sleeping, quite worn out: it were barbarous to wake her. I will go alone."

As she went, however, she found a young waiting-woman of the duchess sitting weeping on the stairs, who, when she heard whither she was going, said, "Let me go with you, lady, as far as the stairs up to the wall. I dare not show my head above in the daylight, for fear they should shoot me with an arrow."

"Come as far as thou wilt, and no farther," replied Adela. "Would to God they would shoot me with an arrow! It would find no hope in my heart to quell."

They soon reached the foot of the wall, and mounted the steps, the poor girl following, till she was within a few feet of the top. There, however, the young lady left her, and going on, soon obtained a view over the fields around. The side to which she had been told to direct her attention was that which, looking over the meadow we have before mentioned, turned towards the south, where the bend of the River Marne, with the canal which insulated the market-place, could be clearly discerned, as well as a little sloping field beyond, and then some undulating country, stretching away towards Couilly.

Adela gazed out with even more than the eager anxiety of the sister in the fairy tale, but nothing did she see except the fair face of nature. She turned her eyes towards the town; but the great mass of the market-

place lay between her and the bridge, and she could behold nothing in that direction either.

"If we had but a boat," she thought, "we might ferry over into those fields, and perhaps escape;" but then she remarked some way up, by the side of the canal, at a spot which must have been visible from many parts of the town, some two or three hundred of the Jacques lolling idly about, as if upon the watch, and she added to herself, "They would catch us ere we could fly."

At that moment a sort of rushing sound, and then a dull, heavy noise, as if a violent blow were struck upon some large hollow surface, met her ear, and made her clasp her hands with terror.

"Run, run," she exclaimed to the girl who was upon the steps; "run and ask what that sound is, and come back and let me know."

The girl was away, and returned in a minute, with a face still paler than before, and her teeth chattering in her head with fear.

"The attack has begun!" she said; "the attack has begun! That was a stone as big as one of these in the wall cast against the gates by the mangonel they have made."

"Now were the time to die," said Adela to herself, looking at a dagger which Albert Denyn had given her. "Now were the time to die."

"Oh, look out, look out!" exclaimed the girl, wringing her hands. "Is there no hope? Is there no help?"

Adela turned her faint eyes over the prospect, towards Fontenoy, and was silent. The next instant she uttered a loud shriek, but it was a shriek of joy.

"Yes, yes!" she cried, "it is—it must be a banner that is rising over the hill! Yes, there it is, full! A banner! a banner! The Captal de Buch! The Captal de Buch! Another too, or a pale gules! The Count of Foix! Spears, spears coming up over the hill! Run, tell the princess, girl! Tell the poor Lady of St. Leu too! Call it up to them upon the gate tower! Bid them fight for their honour! Say help is at hand! Run, girl, run! Who is this first, that comes spurting on like fire! Albert, as I live! my own dear Albert! bearing the captal's banner, too!"

"Where are they, where are they?" cried the voice of the Duchess of Normandy, rushing with her hair all dishevelled, to the battlements, followed by a number

of others. "Where are our deliverers! Alas! they are very few! They must be but the advance. Still, still they will enable us to keep the place till the dauphin comes. But how are they to pass! There is no bridge—there is no boat. How will they pass! oh! how will they pass!"

Adela made no reply. Her eyes, her heart, her soul, were fixed upon the banner of the Captal de Buch and him who bore it. Right onward he rode, like lightning, down the slope, towards the spot where the canal was cut from the Marne, and where the current, being somewhat diverted, was consequently not so strong. No pause, no hesitation was seen; but, waving the banner over his head as he approached the stream, he struck the rowels of his spurs deep into his horse's sides, and plunged down the bank into the water. Loaded with heavy armour, horse and man for a moment wellnigh disappeared in the tide; but the banner still waved in the air, and the next instant charger and rider rose up and came rapidly towards the meadow. The distance was but small; and ere the rest of the horsemen reached the bank, the fore feet of Albert Denyn's steed were striking the firm ground on the other side. No one hesitated to follow up his example. The captal and the Count of Foix plunged in the first; then came the banner-bearer of the count, and then, man by man, the gentlemen of their train.

"Throw open the postern on the meadow!" cried the duchess. "Run and tell our dear Lady of Orleans. Come, let us greet our deliverers."

"Look, look!" exclaimed Adela; "yon poor fellow is off his horse. Help him, good God! he will be drowned! No, no—the gallant captal has got him by the hand. He is safe! he is safe!"

With gladly beating hearts, and brains wellnigh bewildered by renewed hope, that bevy of fair girls ran down the steps to meet the noble gentlemen and their train, who came to fight in their defence. They found the postern gate open, and the Duchess of Orleans and a number of other ladies already there. The captal had sprung from his horse, and was leading him by the rein, speaking as he came to Albert Denyn, who had also dismounted, as was likewise the case with the Count of Foix and several others.

"By my honour, Albert," said the captal, "these  
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brave fellows may well accuse me of having a favourite now. In letting you lead through that river, I have done for you what I would not do for any other man on earth ; and yet you are so ungrateful, that you are going to take from me what I once coveted more than a monarch's crown."

There was gayety and sadness mixed in the leader's tone ; but the voice of Albert Denyn was all sad as he answered, " My lord, my lord, do not make me remember too bitterly that I was once a serf."

" Well, well," replied the captal, " I will soon give you an opportunity of doing great deeds, my friends. Martin, see that the horses be fed instantly, and if any fresh ones can be had in the place, bring them all forth. Cousin of Foix, is not this our fair princess of Normandy ? Lady, by your leave, I kiss your sweet hand, and upon this fair book I swear, that, although I have but too often drawn this my sword against your husband and his friends, it shall to-day achieve your deliverance, or John de Greilly shall sleep this night in death. Lady of Orleans, I know you well. Lo ! here stands a good knight of Foix for your defence. Sweet Adela de Mauvinet, I bring you good tidings : your father is quite safe. But who shall I give you for your champion ? My young hero, here, good Albert Denyn, who certainly has borne my banner this day through fields I never thought to see it cross ! Ladies dear, for the rest of you, on my life, you are so many and we so few, you must e'en share the rest of us among you ; but, nevertheless, I will trust that one good man-at-arms will show himself able this day to defend four ladies against at least a hundred Jacques."

" Alas ! my lord," said the Duchess of Normandy, " speak not of it so lightly : you are very, very few, and you know not the numbers that are opposed to you. We hoped that you but led the advanced party of a larger force. There are very many thousands in the town of Meaux and the neighbouring fields. They are even now attacking the gate. Hark ! the engine has dashed another stone against it !"

" Fear not, lady, fear not," answered the captal. " By my life and by my honour, there is not a doubt or an apprehension in my mind that these few hands which you see around you are quite sufficient to scatter yon base rabble to the winds of heaven, and give their carcasses

to the ravens. Some two miles hence, I have seen a sight which has filled my spirit with a fire that burns for the destruction of these men, who have not only cast off a yoke which was perhaps a heavy one, but have cast off also every feeling of humanity, and by deeds of blood and horror, and infernally-devised cruelty, have shown themselves unworthy of any state but that against which they have risen. But who have we here?"

"My Lord of Chamblé," said the Count of Foix, who had been speaking to the Duchess of Orleans, and now advanced towards the gentleman who approached, "how goes it with you? But badly, I fear. However, we have come to give you help, and we will soon, please God and our Lady, set this affair to rights."

The tone of confidence in which the captal and the Count of Foix spoke, as well as the very fact of receiving assistance at all, at a moment when it seemed beyond all expectation, had restored, in some degree, lost hope and comfort to the breasts of the ladies of France; but such was not the effect upon the young Lord of Chamblé when he beheld the scanty numbers which followed the two leaders, and remembered the immense multitude he had lately had before his eyes.

"There may now be some chance, my lord," he said, "of repelling these villains and defending the place; for even your small force will enable us to man the walls, and to repair what evil is done to the gates; but as for deliverance, I fear we must wait till the regent arrives."

"Small force!" exclaimed the Count of Foix, with a gay and cheerful laugh. "Why, my friend, do you not see we have an army? Is not this the Captal de Buch standing here? to say nothing of the poor Count of Foix; and as for the rest, were you to ask any of the gentlemen ranged in that band, whether for half a kingdom he would have its numbers tripled, I tell you he would say, No! So greedy are we of the glory of this day, that you may think yourself lucky, Monsieur de Chamblé, if we let you share in it."

"Please God, my lords," replied the young nobleman, "what you share I will share; but tell me, what is it that you intend to do? for I see nothing that can be done."

"You ask what we will do," said the Captal de Buch,

taking a step forward, and speaking in a calm, determined tone: "this, my noble lord. With God's pleasure, and these ladies' favour, as soon as our horses are fed, or we can procure fresh ones, we will throw open yonder gates, give our banners to the wind, clear the bridge, we saw as we came down, of the enemy, and smite the base knaves as long as there is one of them or us left living. This is our purpose; and it shall never be said that we suffered ourselves to be here cooped up, trusting to stone walls for defence against the scum of France. I declare, before Heaven, that, would no one else go with me, I would set out myself with my lance in my hand, and ride them down. Who will refuse to do the same?"

"Not I," "Not I," "Not I," cried all the voices round.

"Nor I, my lord," replied the young Lord of Chamblé; "but—" and he glanced his eye over the group of ladies who stood near.

"Doubt not! doubt not!" exclaimed the Count of Foix. "Ladies, do you trust us?"

"Ay, my lord!" answered the Duchess of Orleans. "Were they ten times as many, we would rely on you as if you were a host. As for horses, there are plenty here: had we had men to mount them, we might have been delivered long ago."

"Quick, then! Let them be brought forth!" exclaimed the Captal de Buch. "Put our caparisons on them: they are somewhat wet with the water of the river, but we will soon dry them in the fire of the battle. Ladies fair, if we deliver you this day, as we trust right certainly to do, I pray you remember, whether I live or fall, it is to this young gentleman here present, as much as any one, that you owe your safety."

"I, for one, owe him much already, my lord," said a pale but beautiful girl, taking a step forward. "He generously tried to save my dying father, when delay might have been worse than death to himself. But that father, noble captal, commanded me strictly, the very first moment I could gain speech with you, to give you this packet, and beg you to see right done. I will explain hereafter everything concerning it, but I must not fail to obey his words. Here is the packet."

The captal took it, saying, with a smile, "I must not stay to read it now, fair lady, for there are some skilful hands playing a mangonel against the gates, I hear.

Lo ! here are the horses. Cousin, take you your choice—the gray !—well, give me the black one, then. Brace up those girths tighter, good youth—how the brute plunges ! he has not been forth for many a day. We will take down that fire before we have done. Albert, you shall be my squire, and win the spurs you talked of. Mauleon, come you on the other side. Cousin of Foix, let us make our front as wide as the gate will admit. Bring down any men-at-arms that can be had from the tower, and let the varlets twang the bowstring eagerly upon the enemy till we be past the bridge. Fair ladies, adieu. Close well the gates behind us, and then watch us from the walls. Your bright eyes will give us a thousand hearts. Down with your vizor, Albert !”

“I would fain that he should know me, my lord,” replied Albert Denyn.

“Ha !” said the captal ; “well, as you will. Now let our trumpet sound to the charge. Open the doors and on them !”

The gates of the market-place were suddenly thrown back ; and through the archway might be seen the line of the bridge over the Marne, with but very few men upon it ; but beyond it appeared a sea of fierce and furious faces, turned up towards the walls from the large open space on the other side of the river. A great part of the multitude were but rudely armed, with pikes, or bills, or scythes ; but among them, too, were men covered from head to foot with armour ; and banners and standards were likewise displayed in their ranks ; while in the midst the huge mangonel was seen in the act of heaving another immense stone into the air.

“Halt !” cried the captal, “halt ! till it has fallen. Now on them !—charge ! Greilly to the rescue ! St. George for merry England !”

“Foix ! Foix ! St. Michael and St. George ! St. Michael and St. George !” cried the Count of Foix ; and, dashing their spurs into their horses’ flanks, they galloped through the archway, the proud beasts that bore them, full of food and rest, plunging fiercely, as if to escape from the rein.

The news of a re-enforcement having thrown itself into the market-place had reached the multitudes of the Jacquerie a few minutes before, and had somewhat shaken their confidence ; but when they saw the gates thrown open, and banners and spears coming forth,

many a heart, not knowing the scanty numbers of their adversaries, began to quail ere the first horsemen were upon the bridge.

A movement of flight instantly took place. In vain Caillet tried to rally the multitude; in vain the Parisians, and a number of his own determined followers, made a fierce stand to oppose the passage of the fugitives. As man after man poured forth from the narrow archway and thundered along the bridge, and as the arrows from the gate fell among them, wounding many and killing one or two, the effort for flight became general, and every street leading from the bridge was jammed up with people.

Mad, furious, and despairing, Caillet seized a cross-bow from one of the men near him, saying, "I will show you how to treat the vipers," and, aiming a quarrel at the Captal de Buch, he loosed the string. The missile flew off with a hissing sound, but the pressure of the people had shaken the marksman's aim. The captal rode on unharmed, piercing, at the very moment, the back of one of the fugitives with his keen lance; but the Lord of Chamblé wavered in the saddle, dropped the reins, fell, and was dragged by a page from under the horse's feet.

The young noble uttered no sound; but the man whom the captal transfixing with his lance gave a sudden yell of agony that spread new consternation among the people. Caillet, Jacques Morne, Vaillant, Soulas, and the rest, were borne away in spite of all their efforts; and urging on their horses fiercely through the streets, the men-at-arms, some with their lances, and some with their long swords, pierced, and cut down, or trampled under foot, the immense multitude which had so lately been attacking the fortified market-place of Meaux, but who, now smitten with an inconceivable panic, fled before less than a score and a half of men. They pressed each other to death in the narrow streets, trod upon every one that fell without mercy, and at once, terrifying and slaying each other, issued forth into the fields and meadows round Meaux, fleeing in every direction, but fleeing in vain. Wherever they turned, wherever a group gathered together, there the fierce hand of the pursuers was upon them, hewing them down without mercy, and giving no ear to the cries and entreaties of those who had never listened to pity in their own hour of power.

From seven o'clock in the morning till nearly three in the afternoon, the band of the Captal de Buch and the Count of Foix continued to slay the Jacques and their accomplices; and however marvellous it may appear, no fact of history is more clearly ascertained than that, either pressed to death in the narrow streets, or killed by the sword in the city and the fields around, seven thousand men died in that day before the efforts of less than forty.

Very early in the fight, or rather slaughter, the little band of the captal and the Count of Foix had divided into five separate parties; and when, about three o'clock, the former planted his banner upon a small hill, and looked over the plains around, he could see his horsemen wheeling hither and thither, but no body of the insurgents was to be distinguished in any direction.

He ordered his trumpet then to sound a recall; and he was shortly after rejoined by the Count of Foix, who sprang from his horse and cast himself down upon the turf, saying, "On my life, captal, though I have seen many hard-fought days, and hunted many a wild beast from morning until nightfall, I never remember having been so weary in all my life. Why, till the last hour, my arm has not ceased slaying for a minute. Never let them talk of Samson after this day's work. I wish my sword had been the jaw-bone of an ass, it would have been easier wielded. How many thousand did you kill, captal? Ho! Raoul, take off my casque, and let me have a little air."

"I slew till I was sick of the bloody work," replied the captal. "It was mere butchery; and, on my life, I think I should have sheathed my sword and let them go free, had not the tale of that poor dying wretch we found last night—how that they had roasted her husband's body before her eyes and made her eat him—rung in my ears, and rendered me as merciless as the northeast wind. I have no taste for killing sheep."

"Nor I either," answered the Count of Foix; "and, to say truth, I had but one fair stroke or two with any man; one of the Parisian fellows, I imagine, who, finding me close upon him, turned and aimed a blow at my thigh. He had good arms, for my lance broke on his plastron, and it took me two good thrusts of my sword, which is heavy enough, to end him."

"Albert Denyn had the best of the day, my lords,"

said Mauleon, joining in; "for he attached himself to the man in the black armour, who was worth the whole of the rest of them put together. Albert touched no one else but him, except when people came between them, and then he cut his way through, as a ship cleaves the sea."

"That was Caillet!" exclaimed the Captal de Buch: "that was their leader. Albert vowed himself to his destruction. Did he kill him?"

"Not that I saw, my lord," replied Mauleon. "Just out of the town gates, that fellow, and four or five others who were with him, found horses; but there the black armour turned upon Albert, and they had two or three stout blows together. Then the other put the spur to his horse and galloped, and Albert after him. More than once they came to blows; for, ever and anon, the black armour faced round upon his pursuer, sometimes alone, sometimes with two others; but still Albert made his part good; for I saw him cleave one of them, who had no head piece, down to the very jaws, and then wheel upon the others again. After that, I followed you, my lord, and saw no more."

"Let the trumpet sound!" said the captal: "they are coming in but slowly."

"They are weary to death, I dare say," replied the Count of Foix; "but let us be riding back towards Meaux; there will be bright eyes looking out for us. I think we have lost none of our number, but one who was shot by a quarrel on the bridge. Who was he? I saw some one fall, but did not mark who it was."

"It was the young gentleman we found in the place, my lord," answered one of the men-at-arms. "Monsieur de Chamblé, I think they called him."

"Indeed!" cried the count. "Poor fellow! Was he killed?"

"As dead as a roebuck," replied the man. "He was raising his vizor just at the moment, and it went into his forehead."

"Well, some one must be killed," said the count; and with this brief elegy the subject was dismissed.

The Count of Foix mounted his horse again, and, with their trumpet sounding, he and the captal took their way back towards Meaux. As they rode on, party after party came in and joined them; and before they reached the gates of the city, no one was wanting but one or

two pages and varlets, who were known to have returned to the market-place with some prisoners, the young Lord of Chamblé, and Albert Denyn.

An unexpected obstacle, however, presented itself under the very walls. Some of the citizens appeared upon the battlements, and threatened to keep the gates closed, unless a promise of amnesty was given for the part that the people of Meaux had taken. The cheek of the capal turned very red; but the Count of Foix, remarking that the great valves of the gate did not seem fully closed, spurred forward, and pushed them hard with his hand.

The door gave way, in spite of some resistance that was made. The men-at-arms rushed in, and were joined by a part of the citizens, crying, "Down with the traitors! Down with the traitors! Long live the dauphin! Long live the dauphin!" and in a moment the scene of strife was renewed in the streets of the city.

Worsted, but desperate, some of the mayor's party fled into the houses, and opened a discharge of arrows and quarrels from the windows, drawing down a bitter retribution on their own heads.

"Out upon the traitorous hounds!" exclaimed the Capal de Buch.

"Burn them out!" cried the Count of Foix.

The suggestion was too rapidly adopted; fire was brought; and ere an hour was over, one half of the town of Meaux was in flames. In one of the houses was taken John Soulas, the treacherous mayor; and some of the other citizens would have put him to death at once for the evils that he had brought upon the city; but the capal and the Count of Foix interfered, and, tying him hand and foot, had him carried with them into the market-place, to await the judgment of the dauphin.

In the midst of that small square, where, not many hours before, they had stood expecting death with all the most aggravating circumstances, the ladies of France were now collected to welcome the little band of their gallant deliverers. Two by two, as they passed the gate, the nobles and their men-at-arms, leaving their exhausted horses panting in the shade, advanced to meet the gratulations that poured upon them.

All was joy and satisfaction in every bosom but one there present. Adela de Mauvinet, however, gazed over the band as they advanced, and searched among them,

with an eager and an anxious eye, for the one being most dear to her own heart. She saw him not : she counted them over again and again. He was not there ; and as she stood by the side of the Duchess of Orleans, who was pouring forth thanks with an eloquent voice, Adela sunk slowly down, and was caught in the arms of the young lady of St. Leu, hearing not the words which the latter addressed to her, "He is safe—I am sure he is safe!"

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## CHAPTER XXI.

WE must now not only change the scene to a camp at some distance from Meaux, but pass over at once seven days in the course of our history.

In the centre of the long rows of canvass streets was a large open space before a royal pavillion, with the standard of France upon the right hand, and another banner upon the left. On either side appeared a long rank of men-at-arms ; and the curtain of the tent drawn up, displayed a young and somewhat pallid man, seated in a large chair of state ; while round about him, and back to the very crimson hangings behind, appeared a crowd of noblemen and gentlemen, for the most part armed completely except the head.

Placed, seated in a somewhat lower chair, by the side of the principal personage, was the young Duchess of Normandy, and next to her, again, the Duchess of Orleans. A number of ladies stood behind and around them ; and though all, more or less, were dressed with such splendour as befits a court, it was sad to see that many were in the weeds of mourning.

On the right of the dauphin, a little in advance, was a group composed of the most distinguished men in France, and among them were to be seen the Count of Foix, the Bègue de Vilaine, the Captal de Buch, and the old Lord of Mauvinet, last, as the poet says, but not least, for he was standing next to the prince himself, with his arms crossed upon his chest, his gray hair escaping from under his velvet cap, and his eyes bent thoughtfully, but not sadly, upon the ground.

Near the Duchess of Orleans appeared Adela de Mauvinet, somewhat pale, but with a fluttering colour upon her cheek, which came and went at almost every word; and though her eyes were generally bent on the ground, yet, from time to time, she raised them to a considerable group of persons who had been brought into the presence of the regent by two heralds. One of the party had been speaking to the Duke of Normandy for a considerable time; and when he came to the end of their communication, the prince bowed his head, saying, "Monsieur de Picquigny, greet well, for us, our noble cousin of Navarre, and tell him that there is nothing we desire more than peace with him and all the world. As soon as he gives us such proof and assurance of his good intentions towards ourselves as may prove satisfactory to us and to our council, we will gladly believe his professions, sheath the sword, and take him to our bosom with brotherly love. In the mean time, we readily consent to meet him at our father's royal mansion at St. Ouen, and pledge him our word, in presence of these noble gentlemen, that he shall be safe in person, and have liberty to come and go, without stop or hinderance, for two days before and after our interview. Let him name the day."

"I humbly thank your highness," said the personage who had spoken on behalf of the King of Navarre; "and I beg to present to you, according to your desire, the young gentleman who, with his own hand, took that traitorous villain William Caillet, after pursuing him for two days, in the fields near Clermont. I myself it was who found him bleeding and exhausted, and demanded his prisoner at his hands on behalf of the King of Navarre."

"And so the king struck off his head," added the dauphin; "it was too much honour for a villain like that. He should have hanged him to a tree. However, we thank the noble king for the good service he has rendered France in exterminating the remainder of these Jacques near Clermont. Young gentleman, stand forward: I find that you have done right well, and gallantly; but tell me something more of the means by which you accomplished what has foiled so many experienced knights. How did you contrive to take this villain?"

"I pursued him, your highness," replied Albert Delyn, "from Meaux to Nanteuil, and there lost sight of

him during the night. But I knew that he would not go far, for he had often turned upon me, and was badly wounded. The other man who was with him was wounded too: one I killed under the walls of Meaux. At daybreak, however, after sleeping in the fields, I caught sight of them again, pursued, and overtook them beyond Senlis. There they turned again; and, after a few strokes, Caillet's companion Morne was killed. The two who remained alive were both much hurt, and had lost some blood; but, though he was weaker, and had suffered more, he would have continued the fight had not some horsemen appeared afar off, which made him fly again. I pursued once more; but my horse was weary, and could hardly carry me farther; when, after a long chase, I found my enemy dropped from his beast, unable to go farther. We had been friends in boyhood, and I could not kill him in cold blood; so I bound him, and gave him up to Monsieur de Picquigny, who followed."

"And for the capture of this notorious malefactor," demanded the regent, "what do you claim as your reward? Knighthood, doubtless: so kneel down."

Albert Denyn knelt at the feet of the prince, with his face glowing up to the very brow, on which were the scars of more than one fresh wound. Ere he could answer, however, the Duchess of Orleans rose, and, laying her hand playfully on the string of pearls which Albert wore, twisted through the gold chain round his neck, she said, "By this sign and token I redeem my promise. Charles, your highness must seek some other recompense. I promised, that if he bore this trinket through the hosts of the Jacquerie, to demand knighthood for him of yourself, or of any other knight who, for my love and his merit, would bestow it."

"Well, then," replied the dauphin, "I grant it to your suit, fair lady, and dub him even now. He shall buckle on the spurs hereafter. In the name of God, St. Michael, and St. George, I dub thee knight;" and he laid his sword upon Albert Denyn's shoulder, adding, "This is for this lady's sake! What other guerdon do you demand of me for your good service done?"

Still, ere Albert could reply, he was again interrupted. The Captal de Buch stepped forward, saying, "Your highness promised that, as soon as you had given an answer to the King of Navarre, you would grant me a

boon. I have yielded to a lady, but can yield to no one else."

"Well, what is it?" demanded the dauphin, looking round with a smile.

"I have told your highness," replied the captal.

"Oh yes! I remember," said the dauphin. "Know all men by these presents that I revoke and annul the sentence of high treason which went forth against the Lord of Granville some fourteen or fifteen years ago; restore to his heirs and race their honours, dignities, and possessions, of all kinds whatsoever, and pronounce the said sentence of no effect, and as if it had never been. Let letters of abolition be drawn up," he added, turning to an officer behind. "I perform this act, my Lord Captal, with the greater pleasure, as I myself can bear witness that my father erred, and that the noble gentleman he decreed to death was wholly innocent."

"I give your highness thanks," exclaimed the Count of Mauvinet, stepping forward; "for, though we had not met for years before his death, he was my dearest friend."

"I thank your highness also," said the young lady of St. Leu, "for he was my poor mother's brother."

"Well, now your boon, young gentleman?" asked the dauphin; "we must not keep you kneeling here all day."

Albert Denyn turned pale, and next red, and then, rising from his knee, bowed low and took a step back.

"I have none to ask, your highness," he replied: "I have obtained more than I either expected or asked. There is but one thing farther in all the earth that I could desire; but it is so much beyond all hope, as well as beyond my worthiness, that I might well be accused of daring presumption were I to dream of it. For an instant it may have crossed my mind, but I now banish it forever, and I neither can nor will utter it to any one."

"Then I will for you," said the Captal de Buch. "My Lord of Mauvinet, it is only you who can give him his guerdon. The boon he would ask, if he dared, is this lady's fair hand;" and, crossing over, he took that of Adela in his. She trembled violently; and the Count de Mauvinet stood silent, with no expression of surprise on his countenance, but with a flushed cheek, a downcast eye, a quivering lip, and all those signs which may best denote a fierce mental struggle going on within.

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"My lord," continued the Captal de Buch, "remember all that this young man has been to her, all that he has done for her; think that he has been as a brother in her infancy and youth; think that he has been her protector in his manhood; think that he has defended her honour and her life; think that he has spilled his blood as freely as if it had been water, to save her from death and shame! My lord, we know that many a born villein has won the hand of a noble lady by the mere force of riches—at least so says many an old song. Now, my lord, his riches are of a nobler kind than ever were brought to barter yet; and, moreover, he has been ennobled by the hand of the emperor, knighted by the hand of the regent—"

"Cease, my good lord, pray cease! It is in vain," cried Albert Denyn: "the original taint is there, and cannot be removed."

But the Captal de Buch went on without heeding him. "Fair lady," he said, turning to Adela, "I know not well what are your feelings, and therefore to you, too, I will plead for my young friend. The time was when no gift on earth I coveted so much as this fair hand. I thought it was a prize for which kings might strive: I deemed that few on the earth were worthy of it. Forgive me, lady, if I say that he is worthy, at least as much as any man can be, in services rendered, in noble deeds of arms, in generous courage, and in a lofty spirit. I, John de Greilly, have been held no mean judge of such things, and by my honour and my chivalry, I speak the truth when I say, that were you my own child, were you my own sister, I would give you to him. What say you, my Lord of Mauvinet? Remember what he has done for your child, remember what he has done for you, and, above all, remember what he has done for France. Then if you can lay your finger upon a nobler youth in all this presence, refuse him your daughter's hand."

"But does he ask it?" inquired the Lord of Mauvinet.

"I dare not ask, it my lord," replied Albert Denyn. "Were it possible for me to do so, I would dispute it with a world."

"Well!" said the old noblemen, at length, "well, Albert, one ought rightly to be assured that the blood is noble which is permitted to mingle with the race of Mauvinet. Nevertheless, you have indeed done things that may well prove you of gentle race. If my child

loves you, I will not say you nay. Adela, decide for yourself, now and forever. Your hand might be a boon for the highest and noblest in France; station, and rank, and honour might well be yours, and may still be yours! But if your heart tells you that he has won you well, if you can choose him, and never regret your choice, why, then, now let it be made."

Adela sprang forward, knelt at her father's feet, and held out her hand to Albert Denyn.

"Out of all the world!" she exclaimed, with a burst of strong feeling that nothing could restrain "out of all the world! Would that the emperor had not ennobled him! would that the sword of knighthood had never touched his shoulder! that I might show him how noble I think him." And hiding her eyes on her father's coat of arms, she wept with mingled joy and agitation. But when she raised them again, and looked from her parent to her lover, the colour came somewhat into her cheek; for with a faint and sad smile the young lady of St. Leu came forward, and throwing her arm over Albert's shoulder, kissed him on either cheek.

"I give you joy!" she said, "my noble cousin, I give you joy!"

A proud and meaning smile curled the lip of the Captal de Buch; but his was the only countenance there present which did not bear a strong expression of surprise.

"What is the meaning of this?" exclaimed the old Lord of Mauvinet. "Your cousin, lady! Have my dreams proved right! And is the orphan boy I educated—"

"Albert Denyn, count of Granville," replied the young lady, "and my dear cousin. It was to your abode, my lord, that he was taken by my unhappy uncle Walleran, when the death of his elder brother, and the proscription of the whole race, drove him mad himself, and left the young heir destitute and in danger. He feared to tell you, it seems, who the child was, lest he should bring your house also into peril; he dared not carry him to my father, who was already suspected, from his connexion with the house of Granville."

"But where is your uncle Walleran?" exclaimed the count. "I knew him well in former times: he was always wild and strange, but good at heart."

"Alas! my lord, he is dead," replied the Captal de Buch. "The brief history of the last year is this: by a

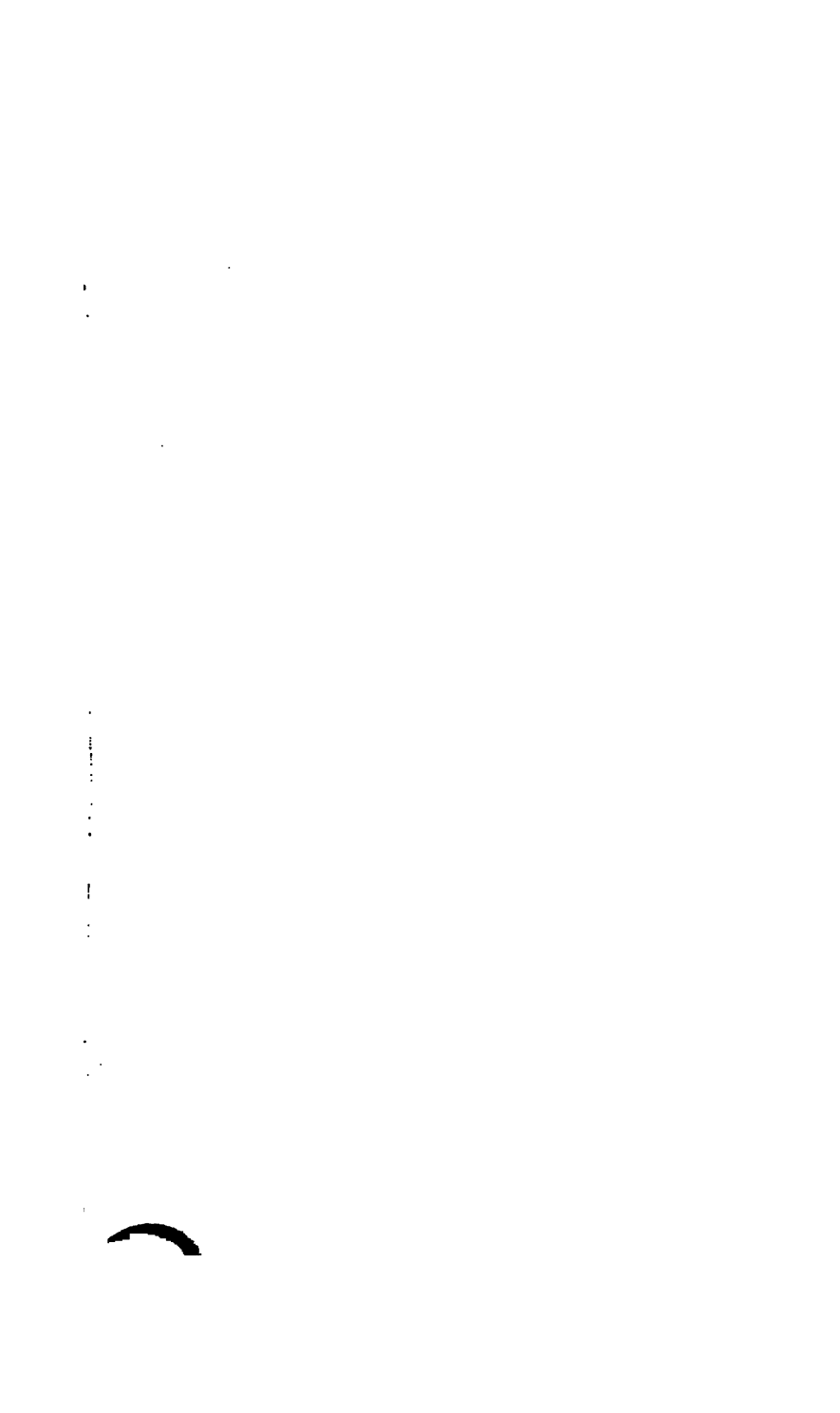
strange fate, for I must not venture to call it chance, my band was joined by Count Walleran de Granville as I was riding away from your castle of Mauvinet. His own nephew, not knowing him as his relation, pledged himself for his good faith. I soon discovered that the wild-looking man was not the being which he seemed; and when he found the station in which Albert was placed with me, he revealed the whole secret, promising me the incontestable proofs of his nephew's birth and rank. These were to be given me at a little inn near St. Leu, where he proposed to leave us. There, however, he suddenly disappeared, enticed away, it seems, during the night, by a fiendlike old man, named Thibalt la Rue, and some accomplices. That old man had brought down death upon his brother, the Lord of Granville, whose servant he was, by a false accusation; and he now betrayed Count Walleran into the hands of William Caillet, who slew him for some old offence. Thibalt la Rue, however, possessed himself of the papers which had been drawn up for me. I, in the mean time, had left behind Albert and some others to seek for Walleran: they found the body, and the Lord of St. Leu coming up, old Thibalt was arrested upon strong suspicion. The Lord of St. Leu turned him over to the Lord of Plessis, as his natural superior; but Monsieur de St. Leu's men searched him before delivering him up, and found the papers for which Albert Denyn had been inquiring, in my name. The noble gentleman kept them waiting for my return from Prussia; but, intending to act strongly against the Jacques, and fearing that he might be killed in some encounter, the Lord of St. Leu gave those papers to his daughter, with directions to deliver them to me, that I might, when occasion served, assert her cousin's rights. Since his unfortunate death, she has placed them in my hands, and I have fulfilled the task. The ways of Providence are strange: and we often see a retributive justice in this world, as if directed immediately by God himself. I find that it was an arrow from the hand of Albert Denyn which smote the old fiend who had betrayed his father and his uncle. His arm was it, also, that, after pursuing his uncle's murderer through two long days, delivered him up to justice, bound and overcome. I have but one word more to say, and it is to you, lady," he continued, turning to Adela. "You heard me declare, I believe, when I entered the market-place at Meaux, that I would

not have had another man with me to share in the honour of that day for half a kingdom. I believe from my heart that, with somewhat similar feelings, you would not have lost the opportunity of choosing this noble youth on account of his merit alone, for the brightest coronet that ever sat upon mortal brow; and, therefore, you will easily forgive me that I kept the secret till your choice was made."

"Oh, my lord," exclaimed Adela, "how generous you are! Noble in every feeling, chivalrous in every act, your name shall long stand high upon the roll of renown,\* and men shall point to the words, 'John de Greilly, Captal de Buch,' and say, 'That was a knight indeed!'"

\* It stands still in St. George's Hall at Windsor, among the first of those mighty champions who are known by the title of "Founders of the Order of the Garter."

THE END.





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